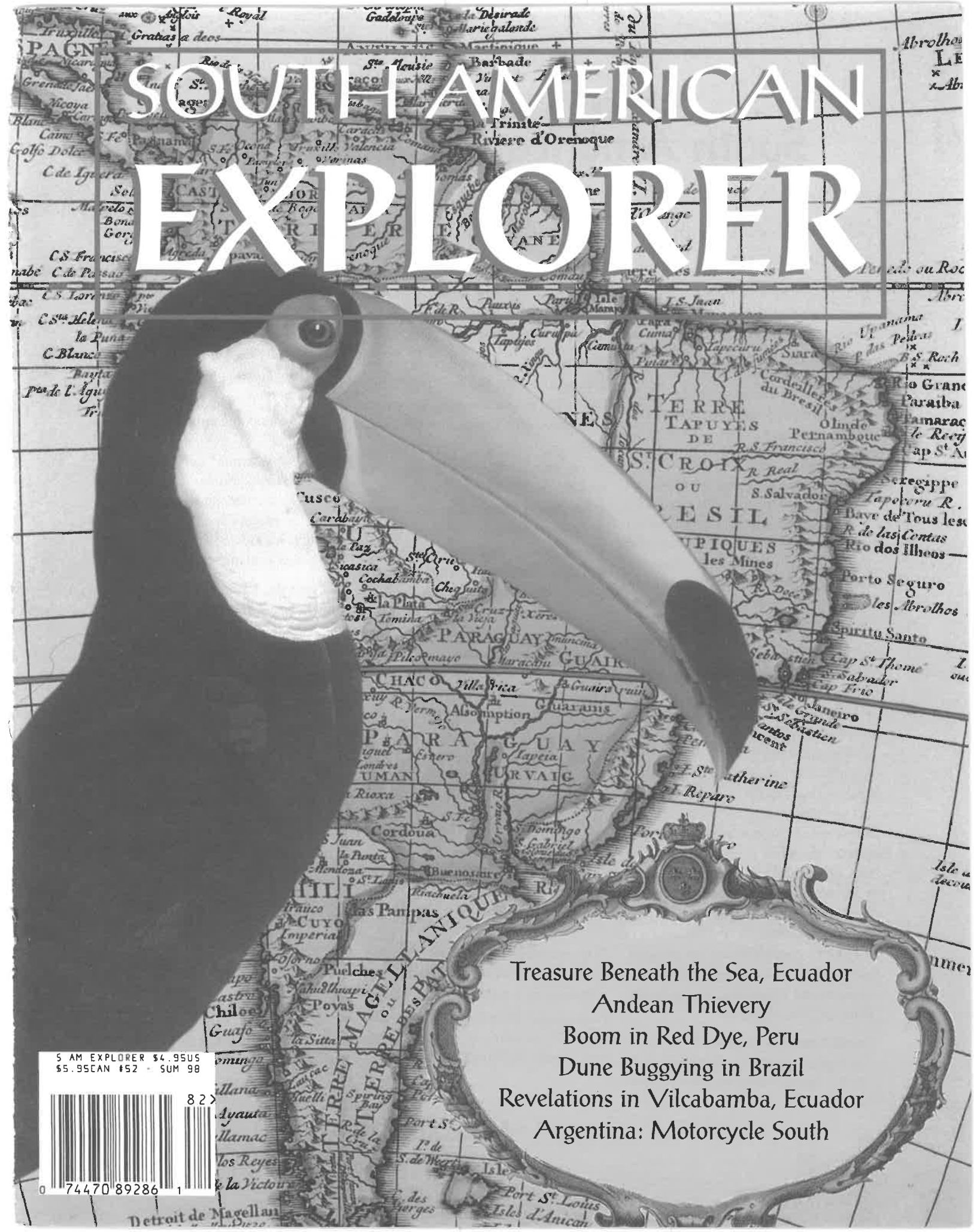
SOUTH AMERICAN EXPLORER



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Explore South America with the

South American Explorers Club

The South American Explorers Club

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. With Clubhouses in Quito, Ecuador, and Lima, Peru, and U.S. headquarters in Ithaca, New York, the SAEC collects and makes available to its members up-to-date, reliable information about Central and South America.

Membership is US $40 ($60 couple) per year. Residents outside the U.S. (including Canada and Mexico) add US$7 for postage. Those wishing to sign up in the United Kingdom can join through Bradt Publications (Please allow 4-6 weeks to receive membership cards), 41 Nortoft Road, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks SL9 OLA, U.K.

Aims and Purposes:
The South American Explorers Club was founded in 1977 to:

- Further the exchange of information among travelers, outdoors people and researchers
- Support scientific field exploration and research in the social and natural sciences
- Promote field sports such as mountaineering, white water running, hiking, caving, biking and others.
- Awaken greater interest in and appreciation for wilderness conservation and wildlife protection.
- Receive contributions for projects aimed at conserving natural resources and improving social conditions in Latin America.

South American Explorer:
A 64-page quarterly magazine with articles on adventure travel, scientific discovery, history, archaeology, mountaineering, native peoples, languages, anthropology, geology, and more.

Membership Services include:
Knowledgeable Staff: Our friendly staff and volunteers provide advice and practical information to members.

Networking: We assist members seeking travel companions for a trip/expedition, or seeking to contact experts in a particular field.

Trip Reports: Trip Reports provide specialized information on just about everything—climbing Aconcagua, volunteering, learning Spanish, lining up a local tour operator, white-water rafting, hiking the Darien Gap, visiting the Galapagos, etc.

Maps: The Club maintains a collection of topographical, geological and road maps for member use and purchase.

Lending Library: There is an extensive library of both English and Spanish books at Clubhouses in Quito and Lima.

Merchandise for sale: Books, maps, tapes, T-shirts and other items are on sale at Clubhouses or through the Club's catalog.

Trip planning: Members can call upon their Club for help and trip planning information.

Discounts: Members receive discounts from many local tour operators, hotels and language schools.

Additional Member Services at Quito, and Lima Clubhouses:
Equipment Storage, Mail, Phone and Fax Service. Book Exchange Library, Flight Confirmations, Message Board, E-mail Service.

South American Explorers Club Catalog:
The Club's annual catalog contains books, maps, music and language tapes. Please call or write the Ithaca office to request a copy of the latest catalog. Include $3.00 if catalog is to be mailed outside the U.S.

To join the Club: Contact us at our U.S. headquarters, use the order form on page 63, or sign up at one of the clubhouses.

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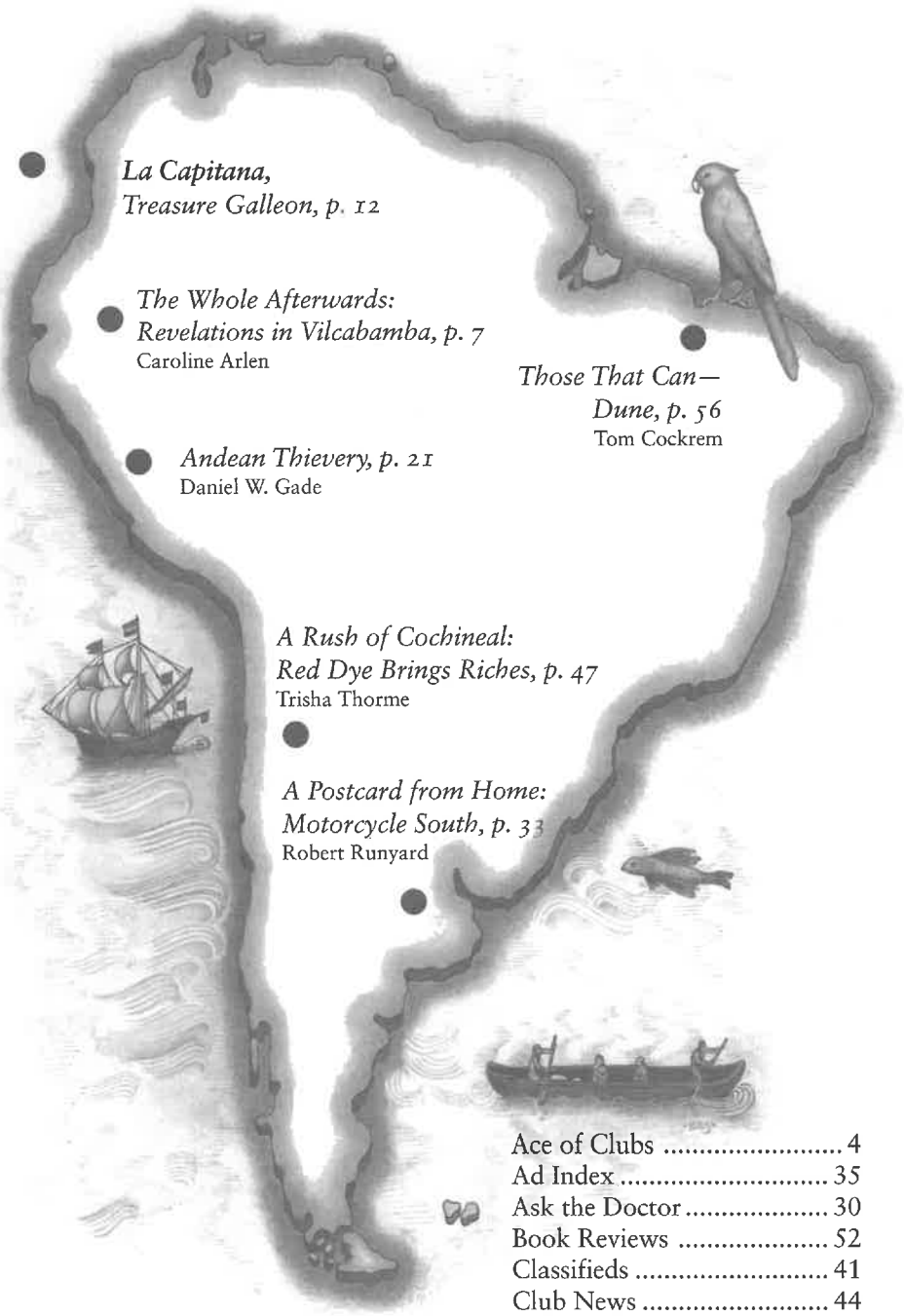

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God, it's a nightmare.

Of course, we've run it by some of the members, and it's worse than we thought. Here's an actual telephone transcript:

MEMBER: Hello? Is this the South American Explorers Club?

CLUB: Er...no. Actually, we're now the Club Formerly Known as the South American Explorers Club.

MEMBER: Is this a joke?

CLUB: We wish it were. You see, a week ago, we received a certified letter from Woodbridge and Associates, a New Jersey law firm that represents the Explorers Club of New York. The firm specializes in patents, trademarks, and copyrights. Anyway, the letter says that the New York Explorers Club holds the trademark to "Explorers Club™" and the South American Explorers Club is advised to "cease and desist" referring to itself as the South American Explorers Club, otherwise, the Explorers Club of New York will be forced to take whatever steps necessary to protect its rights.

MEMBER: Oh, go on...you can't be serious. They said that?

CLUB: Yes.

MEMBER: Bummer.

CLUB: Rather.

MEMBER: What are we going to do?

CLUB: Right now, we're sorting out people's reactions to this "Club Formerly Known as the South American Explorers Club" idea.

MEMBER: Is it working?

CLUB: Hard to tell. It's too early. Maybe.

MEMBER: Well, I think it's a lousy idea...nobody's going to say, "Hey! I want to become a member of the Club Formerly Known as the South American Explorers Club!" It'll never work.

CLUB: Why not?

MEMBER: Think about it. You'll have to spend all your time on the phone. Just imagine. I ask, "How do I renew my membership in the Club Formerly Known as the South American Explorers Club?" You say, "Easy. Just make out a check to the Club Formerly Known as the South American Explorers Club and send it to The Club Formerly Known as the South American Explorers Club...and when you get to Quito and Lima, just drop by our Clubs, which were Formerly Known as the South American Explorers Clubs..." Believe me, it's real bad, man.

CLUB: You don't like it then?

MEMBER: Just say it's not a princely solution. "Prince"...get it? Ha ha!

CLUB: We get it.

MEMBER: Say! When my membership expires, do I get to say that I'm a Former Member of the Club Formerly Known as the South American Explorers Club?

CLUB: Sure. If it makes you happy.

MEMBER: I just thought of something else! Is the Club gonna have one of those neat little symbols like The Artist Formerly Known as Prince?

CLUB: You mean that little androgenous thing that can't be pronounced?

MEMBER: Yeah!

CLUB: Maybe. The art department's looking into it.

MEMBER: Wow! That would be great! By the way, you know, I heard Prince has a trademark on this "Formerly Known as" concept. You might be getting another certified letter from his lawyers.

CLUB: Thanks a bunch.

MEMBER: Listen, as a member, I think you ought to fight this.

CLUB: You do?

MEMBER: Yeah, I mean, how long have we been the South American Explorers Club?

CLUB: Twenty years.

MEMBER: And the New York Explorers Club? They've known about us all that time?

CLUB: Yeah.

MEMBER: We even have members in common! Ain't that right?

CLUB: Yes.

MEMBER: Then fight it, I say! How many members we got?

CLUB: About 8500 at last count.

MEMBER: We need a battle cry. Something like "Remember the Name."

CLUB: Ugh. Anything else spring to mind?

MEMBER: Give me some time.

CLUB: Hmmm...

MEMBER: First things first. Right now we need a South American Explorers Club Legal Defense Fund. Sound the alarm! Pull out the stops! Mobilize the troops! Stoke up the fat cats! Dig in for the long haul!

CLUB: You think so?

MEMBER: You bet! Contact all those other Explorers Clubs out there, the Himalayan Explorers Club, Pittsburg Explorers Club, Canyon Explorers Club, International Explorers Club, World Explorers Club. We'll turn this into an Explorers Club-class-action suit. Start writing press releases and tip off the *New York Times*, *People* magazine, the TV networks. Get the word out. Oh! And by the way, prepare for the worst.

CLUB: What do you mean by that?

MEMBER: You know...we've got to be ready just in case we lose. We should come up with a few sample names for the Club and then throw it open to the membership. We'll turn it into a contest. Whoever comes up with the best new name for the Club wins a life membership and a T-shirt.

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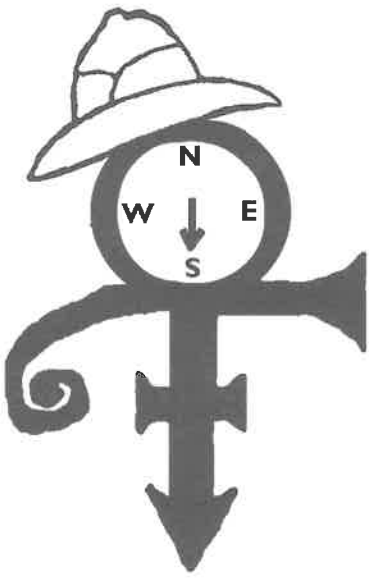

To the Editor,

This is to update the information given in Scott Hoyer's article on the Guyana trail ("Bushwhacked on the Guyana Trail," *SAE* Issue 51). Lethem does indeed have a reasonably comfortable and inexpensive hotel called the Savannah. It's on the "main road" and has a restaurant with decent food at good prices. There is now mosquito netting and even electricity to run the fans 'til around midnight.

I rode the trail from Karanambu (about midway between Annai and Pirari) to Dadanawa (over 100 miles south of Lethem in Guyana) and back to Lethem in a Land Rover that could only be started by pushing it. It didn't have headlights, which made night driving interesting. I hear the piece from Linden to Mabura Hill is now gravel. The entrance requirements for US citizens has changed—only a current passport is required.

Mr. Hoyer was wrong when he said the jaguar was the only creature in Guyana capable of jumping from a tree and eating a human. He forgot about pumas. They are more common and also quite capable of having a person for lunch—fortunately, a very rare event.

I, too, was told "Once you have eaten the meat of the *labba* and drunk of the black water stream, you are destined to return to Guyana," so I ate and drank accordingly. Recently, though, some of my Guyanese friends admitted they had not translated the legend correctly. The original meaning is that if you eat *labba* and drink the water, your bones will be interred in Guyana. Quite a different thing.

Very truly yours,
Richard Ryan

To the Editor,

Thanks very much to the *South American Explorer*, editor Don Montague, and most especially Mark Lowry II for the "Last Days of Moritz Thomsen" (*SAE*, Issue 51). At last I know what finally became of that remarkable man, dead in 1991 in Ecuador but not forgotten by anyone who ever read any of his piercingly vivid books.

Sincerely,
Tom Reidy

To the Editor,

In reference to the letter by Paul Tobler in *SAE* Issue 51: Has Carin Luhr ruled out histoplasmosis? This fungus is not only associated with bat guano in caves, but also with bird guano under large roosts. Although cases acquired in cave environments are well-documented, most exposures occur above ground. Incidentally, much of the Ohio River drainage area in the United States is endemic for histo.

Ed Saugstad
Frederick, Maryland

To the Editor,

In the 20th Anniversary Issue of the *South American Explorer* (Issue 50), in the "Ace of Clubs" column, the author argued that "sooner or later, there's going to be nothing left to explore." While in geographical terms this may be true, I must remind the editors that there is far more to explore in South and Central America than mountains and jungles. I speak from experience, as I am currently living in Guatemala, exploring the effects of micro-lending programs on women's quality of life in different areas of the country. This type of "exploring" affords an astounding sense of discovery.

The point I wish to make is the following: If we, as explorers, limit ourselves only to climbing mountains and traversing jungles, we will one day go extinct because, as you say, "every peak will have 50 cairns on the summit." The salvation of our species (the hearty explorer) is adaptation and evolution. Latin America is currently in a pronounced state of flux and self-definition, trying frantically in the imminent wave of globalism to answer the question "Who are we?" As proud explorers, we must answer the call to explore the intricacies of this process.

Very respectfully yours,
Gabriel Grant

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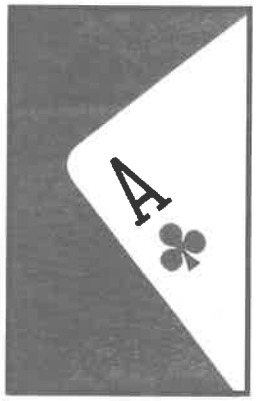

CLUB: Any ideas for starters?

MEMBER: Sure! "The South American Explorers Bulc."

CLUB: "Bulc"?

MEMBER: That's "Club" spelled backward! Pretty clever, huh?

CLUB: Anything else?

MEMBER: Sure. "South American Explorers Cudgel."

CLUB: "Cudgel"?

MEMBER: Cudgel...club...truncheon ... just a little joke. You don't like it?

CLUB: No.

MEMBER: How about "South American Explorers Cl'b"? Replace the "u" in "Club" with an apostrophe.

CLUB: Next.

MEMBER: "South American Explorers Klub." With a "K."

CLUB: Sounds like the Klan. Keep going.

MEMBER: Maybe "South American Explorers Clubfoot"!

CLUB: Let's skip that one—not exactly P.C.

MEMBER: Hey! I'm just throwing out a few ideas. Give me time.

CLUB: O.K. Now, are you sure you want to renew?

MEMBER: You bet! And don't forget, when the Club comes up with a pendant I can wear around my neck like the one the Artist Formerly Known as Prince has, well, you can sign me up as a Life Member.

CLUB: We'll remember.

Editors note: The dispute with the Explorers Club of New York is real and goes back twenty years. Any suggestions, ideas, or advice from the membership is appreciated.

Our thanks to all those members who have given more than can rightly be expected to support the Club during times of adversity. As always, our heartfelt gratitude for your commendable generosity.

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The Whole Afterwards

Revelations in Vilcabamba

Photos and text by Caroline Arlen

Hostal Madre Tierra, Ecuador; 1987:

An Indian dances amid the smoke of burning herbs and circles the man in the bed. Chanting through the night, she beckons the evil from his feverish body. When he is awake—fully awake for the first time in days—the woman is leaving. "Something bad is going on here," she warns.

A scream cuts through the morning mist. Down the hill, the man's friend, his host, is running, stumbling. His shirt is covered with blood.

The southern highlands, Ecuador; February 3, 1997:

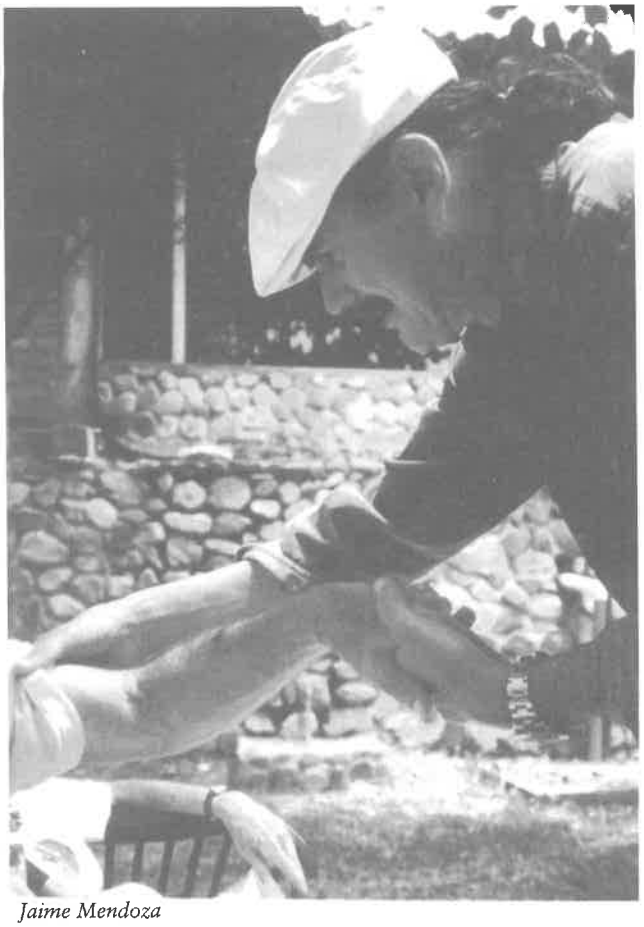
Layers of clouds shroud the Cordilleras, poking up like knees through rumpled sheets. A slight drizzle wets the ferns, the spider webs, the rampant tangle of green across the Continental Divide. Our guide, Orlando, stands with his foot up on the ridge, like a conqueror in a vinyl rainsuit.

To the north, the Chamba and the Yambala rivers cut into a valley and combine to form the Ochima river. This convergence, in the small mountain town of Vilcabamba, is said to have created a place of healing. It is known as "the valley of longevity."

"People from all over the world come to Vilcabamba when western medicine abandons them," says Orlando. "It's a word of mouth sort of thing. I remember two brothers who came here about ten years ago. They had this rare disease that made them all contorted. One of them was worse than the other, had a hard time walking. He walked sort of sideways. They were in bad shape."

"That sounds familiar. What were their names?" I ask.

Caroline Arlen is a free-lance writer and photographer. Her articles and short stories have appeared in U.S. News & World Report, Women's Sports & Fitness, *and* Endless Vacations.



Jaime Mendoza

People come to Vilcabamba when western medicine abandons them.

"It was a long time ago. I just remember that they were tall, striking men. And they had these amazing blue eyes."

The afternoon sun begins to melt the clouds, the body of the Andes appearing like actors out of stage mist. "No man's land," says Orlando. In this stretch of the Andes, which bends east before continuing south into Peru, wind tunnels have swallowed many a small aircraft into rain forest oblivion. Orlando squints at his valley. "This is an area of much good and much evil."

"Was it about ten years ago?" I persist.

"What?"

"When the brothers were here."

Orlando looks warily at me. "I think so. Because they were here when Jaime's son shot himself. Jaime was taking care of the brothers and then they took care of him. It was a terrible time."

Orlando

"Harlan's back," I say.

"Who?"

"One of the brothers."

"The brothers? With the eyes?"

"Yes, with the eyes."

In high school, my girlfriends and I used to joke about Harlan's swagger, because we liked it. Of course we didn't know then, nor did he, that his swagger—the way his arms bowed and swung loosely—came not just from his black-belt karate athleticism, but also from the beginnings of a rare neuromuscular disease.

After college he moved to a little cabin in Vermont where he worked as a solar architect. I only saw him once during that time. The disease was beginning to take hold of his body, his coordination, and his strength, but only in ways noticeable to him. A part of him was beginning to know that something bad was happening. To me he just looked like a neglected plant: very thin, with a long, scraggly beard.

One night we went for a walk up a deserted road. I suddenly felt afraid.

"Is something wrong?" he asked.

"No," I lied.

He stopped. It was so dark I couldn't make out his face. "You're scared," he said. "You feel it."

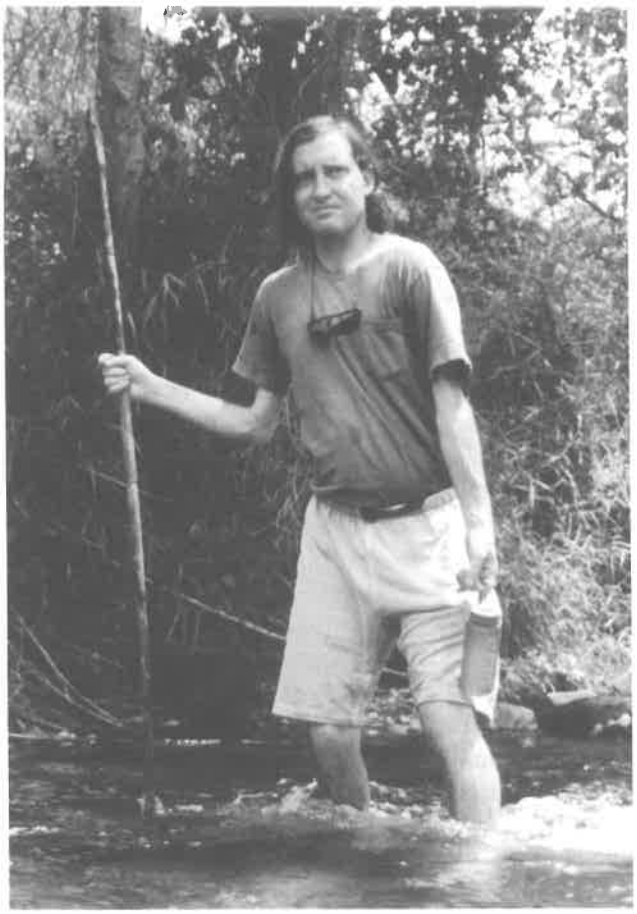
"Yes," I admitted.

"Look behind you." I turned to see the silhouette of an old, crooked house. "It's haunted," he said. "This area is haunted. You felt it when you crossed over the line."

His brother, Stephen, who is older by two years, says he first became ill when he was a senior in high school, in 1975. But, like Harlan, he didn't really notice anything was seriously wrong until after college. Stephen and Harlan were diagnosed with muscular dystrophy in 1983.

STEPHEN: While I was experiencing the weakness in my legs and hip, Harlan was experiencing the

Marion and Eddy



Harlan

weakness in his hands. But neither of us said anything. In fact, it was my uncle who was dying of ALS [amyotrophic lateral sclerosis], Lou Gehrig's disease, who first noticed it. I was working for him in New York and one day, he said, "You're limping." I said it was nothing. But he insisted I go see his doctor.

The neurologist said, "I think you have ALS" and then walked out of the examining room. Left me sitting there with my jaw hanging open, thinking I may be dying.

I guess in some ways it was a relief to later find out it was muscular dystrophy, which is not necessarily fatal. But it was something I had not anticipated in my life. Fifty percent of MD cases end up in wheelchairs.

The doctors said, "One day we'll have a cure. Meanwhile, there's nothing we can do for you. There's nothing anyone can do. Nothing you can do."

Right around that time, Harlan called and asked if I could recommend a neurologist. He said he was having trouble with his hands.

HARLAN: To think that you're basically healthy, and then find out that there is something very fundamentally wrong was shocking. The whole thing was frightening.

The doctors had nothing to offer us except more tests, and the tests were very unpleasant. They were very intrusive and expensive. So what was the point?

MARION (Harlan and Stephen's mother): Of course, I was shocked when they told us. But I didn't realize, really, what it meant. It certainly never occurred to me that it would get worse.

The doctors tried to prove it was genetic, but there's never been any MD in my family, as far back as I can remember. It was my brother-in-law who had ALS. And that is a similar but different disease. Still, I had this terrible guilt that I might have passed on such a thing to the boys.

STEPHEN: For two to three years, I was working in the film industry and, on the side, trying to deal with it by getting massages and going to chiropractors. I was trying to live my life normally, kind of hide it, disguise it, sweep it under the rug.

But it got worse and worse. I'm 5'10" and was an athlete. One hundred-sixty is a nice weight for me. I finally got down to 124 and people said you look like you just got out of a concentration camp. Ultimately, things reached a point where my marriage broke up. I was at my rope's end.

HARLAN: Stephen was in really bad shape, both physically and emotionally. A friend told him to go see this guy, Jaime Mendoza, in Vilcabamba, Ecuador. Stephen didn't speak a word of Spanish at the time, so when he decided to go down to Ecuador, it seemed like it would be a good thing for both of us if I went too.

The earth took me in, embraced me.

JAIME MENDOZA: Some twenty-five years ago I had this near-death experience. I was at the beach and somebody was drowning. I went in to try to save this person, but, when I dived in, I hit this big block of wood and got knocked out. And, in fact, the person that I was going to save, had to save me.

When they were pumping my stomach, and doing the artificial respiration, I was looking at myself. I felt

a tremendous amount of compassion for my body, but I knew it wasn't me. I realized there was something I had to study and learn about myself and that being a playboy in Guayaquil was not going to do it for me.

I had read about Vilcabamba in a *National Geographic*. It was supposed to be a very healthy place where people lived to be very old because of the healing properties of the water.

I eventually quit my big hotel job and moved to this "valley of longevity." But after two weeks of living here, I couldn't figure out what I was doing in this boring place. I thought, "What have I done? This is so stupid. This is not for me."

Then, one day, after a rain, I lay down on the ground. I smelt the earth and it was fantastic. I think it was the first time in my life I really made contact with the earth and felt its maternal nature. It took me in, embraced me. I looked at the colors and I saw this mountain we have here, the Mandango, which is a pre-Inca word that means place of enchantment. And I knew I had come home.

DURGA (Jaime's wife): I grew up in Canada. I started doing yoga. And just out of nowhere, my mantra became, "Go to Ecuador." It would just come into my head. The night before leaving I got really scared. I thought, "What am I doing going alone to Ecuador?" I met Jaime in Vilcabamba.

JAIME: I had been married to Durga just a few months when we had a head on collision with this kid coming down the wrong side of the street, racing his friend. He died and his parents paid a lot of money to have me accused and found guilty of the accident, despite the fact that I had witnesses. I was sentenced to six months in jail and lost almost everything I had.

When I came out of jail, I went to Quito and collected a bunch of back pay from my old job. On the plane back to Vilcabamba, I met two Danish girls. One of them kept scratching. She wouldn't stop scratching. I said, "You have a problem with your skin." She said "Yeah, I have eczema from my toe to my forehead." I said, "I think I can help you with that."

And so they came to stay with me and Durga. I knew naturopathic medicines of healing that came from a German naturopathic master. I had gotten into that stuff even before I moved here. We did intestinal cleansings. I gave them steam baths by putting an electric frying pan at the bottom of a bench, with water in it and eucalyptus on top.

They say this water is miraculous. They say it grows hair. It doesn't, but it is really good stuff and good for skin diseases. In three weeks, she was all right. When she left she told everybody about us.

People just started coming. At first some of them would just work for us in exchange for food and board. Sometimes we needed an electrician and one would just happen to show up. Or a carpenter; stuff like this. This is the way Madre Tierra got going. Harlan and Stephen were some of the first guests we had.

STEPHEN: We had quite an ordeal getting to Madre Tierra. The bus was filled with soldiers. It was intimidating to be on a bus filled with soldiers. And none of them would give me their seat. It was a 10 hour bus ride, from Quito to Baños, our first stop, and then 14 hours from Baños to Loja. And I had no seat the whole way. So I ended up on the floor and they were spitting on the floor and chickens were running around.

I felt terrible, defeated, horrible. I had just gotten divorced and lost my child. It was like I was floating around in nothingness and filled with despair and sadness. I was about as low as I'd ever been.

HARLAN: We had no idea where we were going. By the time we got to Vilcabamba, we were completely wiped out and frazzled and filthy and disgusted. We were walking down the main street around 8:00 in the morning. It was pretty hot already, and there was absolutely no traffic. We stopped in the middle of the street to put our bags down to take a rest. And we looked around and suddenly realized we were in this incredibly beautiful, magical place that was just really quiet, except for the sounds of nature. At that point, things started looking up a little.

We got to Madre Tierra and there was a little flower garden, a little gate and some dirt paths going up the hill. There was no phone back then, or fax. We just showed up.

Naturopathic medicine doesn't recognize diseases. It recognizes sick people.

JAIME: They were pretty depressed when they came here. They were both going through difficult physical and mental situations. Stephen had just gone through a personal crisis. Harlan was looking for a way out of a situation he didn't understand or want to accept.

We did some pretty intense treatments starting early in the morning, really working at it. Steam baths, and mud baths, and massages. Walking at the river edge where the water produces more friction with the earth.

Naturopathic medicine doesn't recognize diseases. It recognizes sick people. And so no matter what the problem is, the principal is basically the same. All sick people, to one de-

gree or another, have an imbalance in temperatures. And if you bring the body to balance, the body can recuperate and get the blood—which does the regenerating of cells and the cleansing of organs—to where it is needed.

Heat will react towards cold. If you trap that heat, it will make the skin open up. The skin is the only organ that does better the more it works, the more it sweats. So you activate the skin to take over the work of the kidneys and the liver. These are the noble organs and you don't want to overwork them. A healthy skin can eliminate three pounds of toxins in one day, easy.

fading in and out of consciousness while she chanted and sang

HARLAN: At 4:30 in the morning, Jaime would call up the hill, "Don Harlan! Don Stephen!" And we would go to the river to swim before the sun came up. Well, not really swim, but plunge into the icy cold water. After the first plunge, Jaime would always claim that it was a two-plunge day, and we would inevitably end up wrestling each other back into the stream. And then, some days, Jaime would claim that it was, in fact, a three-plunge day and we'd wrestle once more into the stream. Then we would bundle up in layers of clothes, to steam, and walk back up the hill as the sun rose over the mountains.

I used to have these ferocious badminton competitions with Jaime's son, Michael. We called him "el Magnífico" because he was very handsome and charming. He was just kind of magnificent.

Then I got very sick. I was delirious and shitting. We went to the hospital, but they couldn't figure out what was wrong. And I got worse and worse. I couldn't eat. I was really deteriorating.

Jaime moved me into his house and one day this Indian woman from Peru came in. I was fading in and out of consciousness while she chanted and sang, and rubbed me with towels and burning things. It felt good to have her around. The next day I got better. Not completely better, but I credit her with saving my life.

I went back up to my cabin, and when I came down I saw Jaime running out of his cabin, yelling. His shirt was covered in blood and I thought he'd been stabbed. But it was Magnífico.

STEPHEN: After we had been there about six weeks, Jaime went through the worst thing in his life. His son shot himself. That was an intense episode for all of us. And then there was the whole afterwards. The hospital, the blood, the funeral. It certainly put all my problems in perspective.

the doctors couldn't find the bullet

JAIME: I had not raised Michael. I wasn't married to his mother. She was an airline hostess and died or disappeared in a plane crash. I located Michael when he was ten years old and brought him here.

During that time when Harlan and Stephen were here, Michael went into my drawer and the revolver went off. I don't know whether he did it intentionally or by accident. He was 15. Certainly, if it had been intentionally, he didn't realize what he was doing. He wasn't aware of the seriousness of his decision.

Harlan and Stephen helped me through this. You see, Michael didn't die immediately. When I took him to Loja, the doctors couldn't find the bullet, so they thought that maybe it didn't go into his brain, but went around his skull because it was a 22 caliber. So, gosh, there was a hope that maybe he would be all right. Then, in another x-ray, they found the bullet had lodged in the bottom of his brain. It had done a lot of damage.

Stephen was at the hospital with me. With those big blue eyes. He helped me keep it together, until there was nothing else that could be done.

After that, it was just a natural bond with these guys. And, I think, for them to see a difficult situation for another person, maybe gave them another perspective on their own problems. Maybe it wasn't so bad, this problem they had. Things don't always just happen to you. They happen to other people, too.

Madre Tierra; February 3, 1997:

We pull into the parking lot at dusk. It has stopped raining, but the menagerie of flower beds and bushes glisten in the sun's surrendering light. Orlando's hand freezes on the jeep door latch as Harlan appears on the terrace above.

Harlan is guiding his father, Eddy, toward a table. They walk slowly, an unnatural pace for Harlan's typically prowling strides. Eddy has suffered a massive stroke. Once sitting, Eddy stares off into space through lopsided glasses. He practices trying to lift a fork with his permanently bent arm.

Marion follows with Harlan's girlfriend, Elizabeth. The night they arrived in Guayaquil, Harlan's mother tripped and fell over her walking stick. Her leg is in a full-length cast.

Continued on page 29.

La Capitana:
Spanish Treasure Galleon

Photos by J. A. Ruth

On October 18, 1654, the 1200-ton *La Capitana Jesus Maria de la Limpia Concepcion* weighed anchor in Callao, Lima's port city, and Captain de Sossa ordered a course set north for Panama.

Built in Guayaquil in 1644, *La Capitana* measured 130 feet—more than 40 feet longer than any Spanish ship on the high seas. The largest ship built in the Americas, the barrel-shaped galleon was twice the size of the famous *Atocha* discovered by treasure hunters in 1985 near Key West.

On this day, *La Capitana* carried in her timbered hold a fortune worth a king's ransom in treasure—taxes collected over a two-year period, valuable coins from the counterfeiting scandal that rocked Potosí, and millions of pesos in contraband not listed on the ship's manifest. Not counting the contraband, *La Capitana*'s cargo included 2212 silver bars, 216 chests of silver coins, and 22 crates of silver goblets, pitchers, trays, and candelabra.

valuable coins from the counterfeiting scandal that rocked Potosí

Dangerously overloaded with treasure and six-hundred passengers, La Capitana rode deep in the water, her keel was twenty-four feet below the surface. So heavily laden was La Capitana that her escort ship, the *Almiranta*, had to lower its sails so as not to overtake her laboring charge. It took the two ships a week to inch up the coast to the Bay of Guayaquil.

2212 silver bars, 216 chests of silver coins, and 22 crates of silver goblets

At 11 o'clock on the night of October 26, 1654, under a full moon, the bow look-out aboard *La Capitana* noticed land. A navigational error had brought the ship perilously close to shore. The pilot ordered the cannon fired—once, and then again—to alert the *Almiranta*'s Captain Alonzo Montero following behind. He then ordered the sails tightened. *La Capitana* heeled slowly, turning laboriously across the wind and heaving toward the open sea. It was then that the ship's keel slammed repeatedly against an underwater reef. The heavy blows took their toll. The rudder broke free. *La Capitana* listed on the water out of control.

Captain de Sossa stayed with his ship, lurching about his cabin naked and drunk.

Frantically, the crew tried to turn the stricken ship away from the rocks and drop anchor, their work hampered by the clutter of boxes and crates of unregistered and personal cargo. Amidst the chaos and confusion, sailors struggled to disentangle an anchor cable. This cost precious time. With the ship crashing against the rocks below, the crew finally dropped two anchors just as the ship heaved. The anchors tethered *La Capitana* perilously close to the reef.

That night, the exhausted crew toiled ceaselessly at the pumps while all who could pitched in, bailing with jars or anything that lay close at hand. As dawn broke on October 27, the situation grew even more dire. Rising water defied the pumps. Water in the lower hold rose seven palms (nearly five feet) and continued to rise. Captain de Sossa stayed with his ship, lurching about his cabin naked and drunk. A ship's officer later testified that he saw his captain nude in his cabin consuming the hallucinatory and addictive *paraguas* plant (a narcotic mushroom). Speaking to the court, the ship's officer opined that de Sossa expected to die and had therefore decided to meet his maker in a state of euphoria (*Shipwreck*, by Dave Horner). At length, Captain de Sossa roused himself long enough to dispatch Don Francisco Tello in the gondola with orders to row to the *Almiranta* and bring prompt help to unload the royal treasure. While they waited, sailors aboard *La Capitana* cut an opening through the deck and struggled to haul the heavy silver ingots up from the hold and stake them on deck, ready for rescue. But no boats came. Don Francisco Tello returned with word from the *Almiranta*: Expect no help for the *Almiranta*, too, had scraped rocks and feared the worst. As Don Francisco Tello delivered this news, Captain de Sossa turned to see the *Almiranta* hoist her sails and move off. This craven deed so infuriated *La Capitana*'s crew that Captain de Sossa could barely restrain them.

Water gushing through planks in the damaged hull rose to fourteen palms and churned ominously in the holds. Treasure chests littered the deck, but there was no help in sight. His ship in grave peril, Captain de Sossa held council with the ship's officers. It was then de Sossa

ordered the masts cut to make rafts and so transport the silver to shore. But as the captain and soldiers left the ship, panic broke out. The crew ignored orders to stay aboard. In desperation, crew and passengers leapt into the sea. Grasping planks, cables, masts, and even chicken boxes, they left their posts and pumps and made for shore.

Twenty passengers jumped over the side and swam towards shore, their pockets stuffed with gold, silver, and other valuables. All died.

By three o'clock on the afternoon of the 26th of October, de Sossa returned to his ship. All appeared lost. In desperation, the captain, with the remnants of his crew, hoisted the sprit-sail and maneuvered the sinking ship away from the reef and through a channel to beach in shallow waters. Here, the crippled *La Capitana* came to ground in four and a half fathoms.

Before *La Capitana* sank out of sight, more rafts were hastily thrown together to save as much treasure as possible. Chopping through the deck, Captain de Sossa sought volunteers to dive into the hold and salvage what they could. In the final hours of the doomed ship, twenty passengers jumped over the side and swam towards shore, their pockets stuffed with gold, silver, and other valuables. All died.

For King Philip IV of Spain, the wreck of La Capitana was a crushing disaster. Spain, teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, required vast sums to pay for European wars.

The treasure of *La Capitana* lay on the sea floor as survivors debated measures to retrieve at least a portion of the priceless cargo. Every day for four months, divers brought in from Panama dove the waters off the small town of Chanduy. In all, they salvaged some 3,339,751 pesos, a treasure larger than the 2212 silver bars noted on the ship's manifest.

But with time, changes swept over Europe. The sinking of La Capitana was the beginning of the end of Spain as a major power, and off Chanduy on the coast of Ecuador, currents shifted the sands. Little by little, the silver coins, bronze cannonballs, and other booty that had not been salvaged when *La Capitana* went down disappeared, buried under layers of silt. Soon, even the location of *La Capitana* slipped out of memory.

Chanduy is a fishing port. To the fishermen who live in this small village, the jagged wreckage off shore always meant trouble. When they went out to fish, it tore their nets. All they ever dredged up was the occasional piece of worthless pottery. But while the fishermen gained nothing, these potsherds became the key to finding the 25 to 125 tons of silver believed to lie among the rotting timbers of *La Capitana*.

Rob McClung[1] is an American diver, president of Oceanic Atlantic Corp, and a treasure-hunter. McClung carefully studied the historical records before launching his search. Off the coast of Chanduy, he finally located a debris trail of broken pottery and followed it across the ocean floor. It was hard work. Unable to trust his magnetometers because of iron deposits on the ocean floor, McClung sought help. He persuaded fishermen to drop marker

buoys where they had found potsherds. Eventually, while scuba diving in the area, he unearthed a piece of pottery that contained silver coins.

believes that he alone has been chosen by destiny to find the wreckage of the galleon

Did Rob McClung rediscover the wreckage of *La Capitana* lost for nearly 350 years? He himself is certain. So, too, is John de Bry, a naval archaeologist. De Bry has studied the ship's timbers, its hoard of silver coins (see page 18). He has matched the sixty-four pound bars of silver with the ship's manifest. "There is no reason to believe this is not *La Capitana*," he says. "There is not a single coin with a date later than 1654," he notes. "No amphora or any other artifact not of the period." If the wreckage found by McClung turns out to be *La Capitana*, it should be no surprise—the wreck is located in 30 feet of water a mile out to sea from El Real, a coastal village founded by the survivors of the *La Capitana* tragedy.

Not all agree with McClung and de Bry. As word of the discovery spread, a second group of treasure hunters disputed McClung's claim. Rony Almeida, an Ecuadorean, argues that *La Capitana* is not where McClung says it is, but five miles away in a permit area Almeida holds. Almeida claims he was aboard La Capitana in a past life and believes that he alone has been chosen by destiny to find the wreckage of the galleon. He has charged that McClung's claims are part of a scheme to hoodwink investors and cash in on book, film, and merchandising rights. Almeida dismisses the coins and artifacts McClung has brought up from the ocean floor. "They are not from McClung's site at all," he insists. "McClung took them. He planted them on his permit site to make it look like he discovered *La Capitana*." De Bry disputes Almeida's claims. De Bry dove with McClung's expedition for three days and says he observed divers pulling claims from mud banks at a depth of thirty feet. It would have been impossible to plant them, he says.

It does appear that McClung has the stronger claim. To date, Almeida has yet to bring up a coin, cannon ball, or other artifact from his permit area. Moreover, Almeida has been under suspicion of having bilked investors in the U.S., and one of his associates, Don Johnson, came under investigation in Florida for fleecing investors 1.5 million dollars to raise a ship near St. Croix. Interestingly, the ship in question was billed as belonging to pirate José Gaspard who, in fact, never existed. Also, when the time came to investigate the "Gaspard wreck site," it turned out to be nothing more than an old phosphate barge.

two silver royals worth 10 to 20 thousand dollars apiece

Since McClung's discovery, expedition divers have brought up more than 5,000 silver coins, three stamped sixty-four pound silver ingots, dozens of bronze cannonballs, a cross of gold, and two silver royals (coins minted especially for the king) which expedition conservator Joel Ruth estimates to be worth 10 to 20 thousand dollars apiece.

Joel Ruth, conservator for the salvage expedition

John de Bry, naval archaeologist and authenticator of La Capitana

Little of the treasure shipped aboard *La Capitana* ever reached Spain. Some of the silver recovered from the wreck was taken to Panama, shipped across the isthmus, and stowed aboard the *Nuestra Señora de las Maravillas*. The ill-fated *Maravillas* went to the bottom near Abacos Island in the Bahamas. Another hoard of salvaged silver from *La Capitana* ended up on the *Aviso San Miguel Archangel*. Like the *Maravillas* before it, the *Archangel* never reached Spain. She ran afoul of a northeaster off the coast of Florida. Today, her wreckage lies on the bottom of the sea near Jupiter Inlet (see *SAE* Issue 48). Finally, ships carrying smaller amounts of *La Capitana* silver ran into the English armada. The last of the booty salvaged off Ecuador was carried off in English ships.

Is *La Capitana* cursed?

Is *La Capitana* cursed? There are many who think so. Indeed, along with the *Maravillas* and *Archangel* disasters, other misfortunes have been linked to the gal-

leon. Even divers harbored suspicions after a venomous sea snake bit a diver. He died in minutes, and his death closed down *La Capitana* salvage operations for a year. Joel Ruth, a field archaeologist and the conservator for the expedition, wryly speculates that if there is a curse, it might be Indian. The Spaniards enslaved thousands of Indians to work in the hellish silver mines of Potosí. Countless died. "These Indians had good reason to hate the Spanish conquerors and curse their silver," says Ruth.

If and when the remaining treasure of La Capitana is ever recovered, it's not certain who will get it. The government of Ecuador has given no guarantees. This worries McClung. Further, by law, the Ecuadorian government can confiscate 50 percent of the treasure. Even that is only part of the story. Another law deprives salvagers of the real value of recovered booty. A coin collector might willingly pay thousands of dollars for a Royal, but by law, Ecuador can get away with paying salvagers the value of the coin's weight as silver. This might be no more than two or three dollars. McClung and his backers are, of course, lobbying to change these laws. Then, too, Ecuador might decide to claim *all* the treasure as its national patrimony. Many think this course unlikely, however, as such a claim might trigger equally valid claims from Peru and Bolivia where the silver was mined.

For months, *La Capitana* and its treasure sparked headlines around the world. Then, with the outbreak of claims and counterclaims, wild accusations, and government intransigence, all opera-

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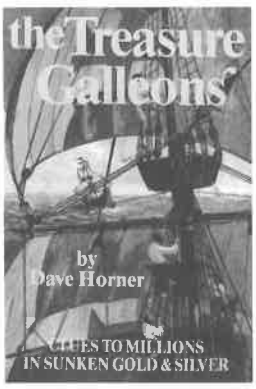
From *The Treasure Galleons* by David Horner



The great volume of treasure that the galleons brought to Spain was the main factor contributing to the country's rise, as well as to her decline. Spain's bullion imports soon exceeded the money supply in all of Europe, which catapulted financial investments of Castilian merchants into fortunes overnight.

Because of Spain's financial commitments beyond her borders, her imported gold and silver did not remain long in the vaults of the crown or in the pockets of her people. Her fiscal solvency continuously depended on the treasure shipments from Cartagena, Veracruz, and Callao. As long as the treasure shipments arrived regularly, Spain could afford to purchase goods and services from other European nations, and she did so with little concern for developing a more fully unified economic environment of her own. But when galleons failed to arrive, when storms and reefs and enemy privateers began to take their toll, it was a different story.

Delays or failures of the treasure fleets affected not only the large mercantile houses of Spain but the crown as well. Except during unusually good years, when the king's equity position was enhanced by bulging coffers, most of the crown's share of the treasure had long before been mortgaged to foreign banking interest in order to finance Spain's increasing desire for greater wealth and image in the New World. The failure of a *flota* to return from the Indes placed entire cities under financial stress. Large merchants and silver brokers whose inventories had been pledged, right on down to the stevedores on the dock whose wages were in arrears—all were financially affected.

Nevertheless, a multitude of investors engaged in the galleon trade. Fast growing import-export houses flourished. Dividends and profits grew with each successful round trip. Wealthy merchants became wealthier and in turn would finance others. Rates on loans fluctuated between 20 percent and 50 percent depending upon the commodity being shipped, the financial condition of the borrower, and the confidence in the venture. In 1639, Philip IV was so desperate for funds to finance the departing treasure fleet that he paid 70 percent interest on the monies loaned to him.

Dave Horner's *The Treasure Galleons: Clues to Millions in Sunken Gold and Silver,* is available from the publisher at Florida Classics Library, Box 1657, Port Salerno, Florida 34992, for $15.00 plus $3.00 p&h. His new book, *Shipwreck: A 17th-Century Padre's Memoirs of Sea Tragedy and Sunken Treasure,* contains data on *La Capitana* and several other related Spanish maritime disasters. The manuscript is currently being reviewed by several publishers. ⚜

Authenticating *la Capitana*

Report by Naval Archaeologist John de Bry

Aboard the R/V *Explorer*, off El Real, Ecuador, 2nd of April 1997

At the invitation of the Direction of the Cultural Patrimony of Ecuador and of SubAmerica Company, I inspected an assemblage of cultural material excavated from a 17th-century shipwreck located 1 nautical mile offshore from the town of El Real, Ecuador, in 10 meters of water. From Saturday, March 29 through April 1, 1997, I spent the day aboard the R/V *Explorer* and inspected a wide variety of items excavated from the wreck site. Over one thousand silver coins and one gold coin were brought up, along with a large silver bar, pottery shards, and encrusted objects, some tentatively identified as iron fasteners and copper-based cannon balls.

A vast majority of the silver coins were in an excellent state of preservation, and many could be identified without needing to clean them. All the identifiable coins were minted in Potosí, present-day Bolivia, formerly known as Upper Peru. Potosí was the single largest source of silver in the 17th and 18th centuries. None of the coins I examined were dated earlier than 1649. Large denominations, such as 8-reales, made up the bulk of the numismatic assemblage. A fair percentage of 4-reales was noted, with few small denominations such as 1 and 2 reales. Most of the coins were counterstruck. Similar counter struck coins were discovered on the shipwreck of the *Nuestra Señora de las Maravillas*, sunk on the Little Bahama Bank during the night of January 4, 1656. The *Maravillas* carried the treasure from the *Jesús María de la Limpia Concepción* which Left Callao on 18 October 1654 and was lost off Chanduy Reef on 27 October 1654.

The gold coin was identified as a 2-escudo minted in 1652 in Seville, Spain (Type 31, No. 129, p. 237, *Numismatica Española, 1474-1988*, F. Calicó, X. Calicó, & J. Trigo, 7th edition, Barcelona, 1988).

The silver bar displayed several markings, including the date "1964" in Arabic numerals. The weight was indicated as "128 M," the "M" standing for "marcos." There are 2 marcos to a pound, making this bar 64 pounds. A small Cross of Jerusalem was incised to the right of the weight markings. The Roman numerals for 27 (XXVII) represent a manifest number. The "Ley" or fineness number was incised in an odd fashion 2M376, i.e. 2376 on a scale of 2400, making this bar very pure. The

CHARGES PRESSED BY DON PEDRO DE VELASQUEZ AGAINST DON FRANCISCO DE SOSSA AND THE PILOTS, CHANDUY, MARCH 1, 1655:

It was not lost by storm, but by the negligence of the General and the pilots.

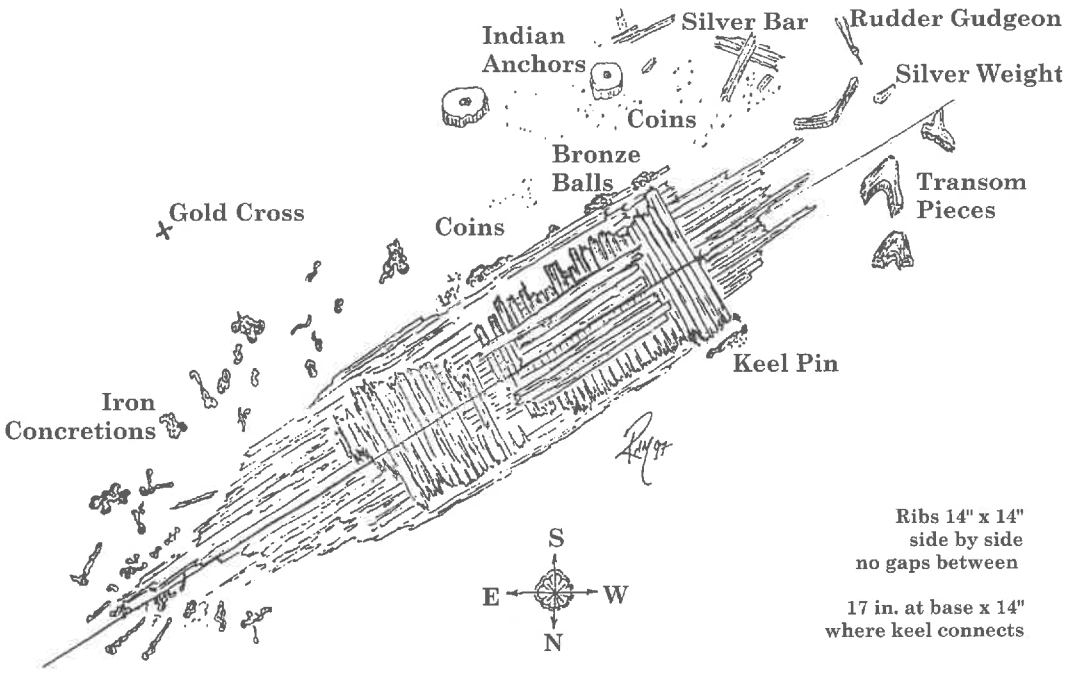
LETTER FROM DON PEDRO DE MENENDEZ TO THE KING OF SPAIN, LIMA, NOVEMBER 15, 1654:

The *Capitana*...got lost in the Punta del Carno, and at 11 at night it started to bump against some reefs...it started to take a lot of water, and seeing the risk they were in, the people threw out one anchor, but the sea took the cable away...they cut down the masts and beached three quarters of a league from land in six fathoms of water.

WITNESS PEDRO ALONSO PRIETO, MERCHANT, LOS REYES, NOVEMBER 17, 1654:

About 11 o'clock, he was in bed and heard voices announcing land, and half naked went toward the bow and saw land very close...the pilot ordered to hold the sails by starboard and turn the rudder so the ship started entering the bay...the witness went back to sleep, and almost immediately, the ship scratched the shoals and lost the rudder so now it crossed the wind to remain bumping in the shoals and began to fill with water almost seven palms and nine.

fineness number is usually displayed in Roman numerals. A shipper's or owner's mark in the form of a monogram comprised of an N or M, a E and a lozenge. Subject to further analysis, this mark could be the monogram of Capitán Juan de Melo. On Friday, March 28, another silver bar was found. The bar bears a marking in the shape of a large L with a lozenge. This particular mark was registered to Capitán Juan Fernandez de Orozco, and consigned aboard the *Jesús María de la Limpia Concepción*, also known as *La Capitana*. The olive jars, based on shape and rim characteristics, are of Type A, typical of the 17th-century olive jars excavated from securely dated shipwrecks and appear to have had an average capacity of 17 liters, large enough to accommodate the Castilian wine arroba of 16.133 liters. Similar jars were found on a notable wreck from the period, the *Santo António de Tanná*, a Portuguese ship built at Bassein near Bombay in 1680 and lost in front of Fort Jesus in 1697 in Mombasa, Kenya (Sassoon, 1981). Another wreck which yielded similar olive jars is the *Nuestra Señora de Atocha*, lost at the southernmost portion of the Florida Keys in 1622.



The copper-based cannonballs are remarkable in the sense that copper-based or bronze cannonballs have never been reported in either an archaeological or historical context. The value of copper during the 17th century was very high. The production of a bronze cannon, for instance, typically cost between 7 and 8 times more than that of an iron one. The copper-based cannonballs might be explained by the fact that there was no known source of iron in the New World during that period and that the entire region of Chile, Peru, and Ecuador is rich in copper deposits. I surmise that the cannonballs were also considered as bullion and, if not needed for defense during the sailing from Callao to Panama, they would be traded and/or bartered and taken back to Spain to be melted down. The ship would have then used common iron cannonballs. To determine if the cannonballs are bronze, it must be determined if tin is present in a substantial percentage. I suggest that an elemental analysis, using atomic absorption spectrometry, be conducted. Interpretation of these results may help determine the source of the copper based on trace elements detected in the cannonballs.

Measurements of various parts such as futtocks and floor timbers suggest a very large sailing vessel. Size of frames, floor timbers, end futtocks, as well as distance and space between single and double frames suggest a ship of between 1000 and 1300 tons displacement, and an overall length of between 120 and 130 feet. Due to poor visibility and the amount of overburden covering the site, I have not been able to determine as yet which section of the ship is presently exposed.

Based on all the cultural material that I have examined I can safely state that this wreck is that of the *Jesús Maria de la Limpia Concepción*, also known as *La Capitana*. There is not one single element that could suggest another identity or dating for this particular shipwreck. ✠

Continued from page 17.

tions ground to a halt. With no agreements with the Ecuadorian government, McClung is wary about continuing operations. At his villa in Punta Carnero, Al-meida spent days writing denouncements of McClung's discovery and waiting for the right time to show off his *La Capitana*. After accepting a large amount of money from Norwegian investors, Almeida skipped town.

There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind.

All artifacts recovered from *La Capitana* were cataloged and cleaned. The entire trove was delivered to the Central Bank in Quito on June, 1997. The contract with Ecuador called for a division within ten days of the trove's receipt by the bank. All those with a stake in the treasure are still waiting.

For its part, the Ecuadorian government has not been in a hurry to take a stand on salvage rights. During the last several years, Ecuador has gone through difficult political times. A decision over which is the real *La Capitana* is not important to officials grappling with major national problems.

Big treasure is big trouble

"Treasure is trouble. Big treasure is big trouble," says Robert Marx, a Florida archaeologist. The treasure of La Capitana has attracted a strange cast of characters. But whether motivated by greed or by the highest of principles, they all have something in common—an obsession. In the words of Joseph Conrad, "There is something in a treasure that fastens upon a man's mind. He will pray and blaspheme and still persevere, and will curse the day he ever heard of it, and will let his last hour come upon him unawares, still believing that he missed it only by a foot. He will see it every time he closes his eyes. He will never forget it till he is dead and even then...There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind."

[1]While Rob McClung did find *La Capitana*, many were responsible for his being there in the first place. The entire effort was a huge undertaking. The lease on *La Capitana* shipwreck site was owned by Herman Moro of SubAmerica Discoveries, Inc. Moro had teamed up with Dave Horner and his partners in Maritime Explorations International, Inc., who conducted two geophysical surveys in the Chanduy area and had obtained some very strong magnetometer and metal detector readings. Other principals in the salvage consortium were Don Mackay, owner of the salvage vessel *R/V Explorer*, Manny Casares, an investment banker from Vero Beach, and Ecuatoriana Gloria de Vinueza who, along with members of her family, held controlling interest in the overall project. These principals contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars for the research, equipment, and operating capital required to locate, excavate, retrieve, and preserve what was left of *La Capitana's* long-lost cargo.

LETTER FROM DON PEDRO DE VELASQUEZ TO THE KING OF SPAIN, DATE UNKNOWN:

The water was rising, threatening with great ruin and wreckage. The people that were sailing (in the *Capitana*) said that it was a very confusing night because everybody thought that it was their last hour.

LETTER FROM DON PEDRO DE VELASQUEZ TO THE KING OF SPAIN, CHANDUY, NOVEMBER 28, 1654:

If the *Capitana* would have sunk in the reefs where she scratched, it would have been impossible to recover the silver, because it is rocky and sharp...but where it beached, even though the sea is brave, God has been served, using His mercy, because it is in a clean place that is not muddy nor sandy but hard, so each day we make progress with the salvage of the silver.

LETTER FROM DON PEDRO DE VELASQUEZ TO THE KING OF SPAIN, CHANDUY, FEBRUARY 12, 1655:

The *Capitana* had close to ten million pesos on board, seven that were without register [contraband].... From the forty pieces of bronze [cannons] that the *Capitana* carried, forty have been recovered...The impediments have been the many merchandises obstructing the salvage, and the long time the cargo has been under the sea, that is the reason some silver is going to be lost, since the force of the sea has dumped over [the *Capitana*] a good amount of sand.

Andean Thievery

by Daniel W. Gade

Although I don't have the statistics to prove it, it's a fair bet that any formal study of petty larceny would establish Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia as major rip-off centers. Further, of all the countries I've come to know, thievery in these countries is practiced with the greatest ingenuity.

Thieves and the paranoia they arouse are the bane of Andean travelers. Here, I offer some ruminations on the subject based on my travels. Although I see myself as a seasoned traveler, I'm chagrined to admit that the petty larcenists have done their number on me on half a dozen occasions.

Thieves are the bane of Andean travelers.

The best way to understand thievery is in the context of culture and time. It's not a subject that gets a lot of attention. Indeed, before the 1970s, thievery didn't even rate a mention. On the other hand, most travel literature in the last twenty-five years describes some act of despoliation. These vary in the way they deal with theft and the emotions surrounding it.

Tom Pow's *In the Palace of Serpents: An Experience of Peru* dwells on theft almost obsessively. He devotes whole chapters speculating on the evil intentions of low lifes and ways to outwit them. Up to a point, Pow's misadventures evoke sympathy—he was, after all, robbed on two occasions. Still, it's interesting to note that his getting robbed seems to have galvanized him, providing him with the creative inspiration to sit down and write the book.

Guidebooks to Andean countries reflect the fear of theft by the space they set aside for advice on how not to get ripped off. Before the 1970s, the *South American Handbook* (*SAH*) says nothing about thievery. But from then on, cautionary remarks creep in, no doubt reflecting an avalanche of travelers' complaints. The 1981 *SAH* urges travelers to be cautious and in bold type posts warnings about certain cities and whole countries. By the 1990s, theft advisories extend to a variety of specific locales beyond the cities.

Nowadays, almost every guide, from the Lonely Planet guides and the Bradt publications to the Sierra Club book by Frazer and Secreast, dish up generous admonitions to travelers. Stephen Lee in *The Andes* comments knowledgeably about "running the Andean gauntlet" and textile-maven Lynn Meisch, an Andean specialist tells it like it is in her forthright *A Traveler's Guide to El Dorado and the Inca Empire*. Peter McFarren's *Cultural Guide to Bolivia* is more coy: He simply cautions travelers to watch out for pickpockets.

Early on, the South American Explorers Club alerted members to theft and recommended its denim leg pouch with a Velcro fastener. I used a leg pouch and felt secure long after the elastic sagged after many months of constant use. My downfall came in a Lima *colectivo* when I lifted my pant leg to extract a bill. A fellow passenger

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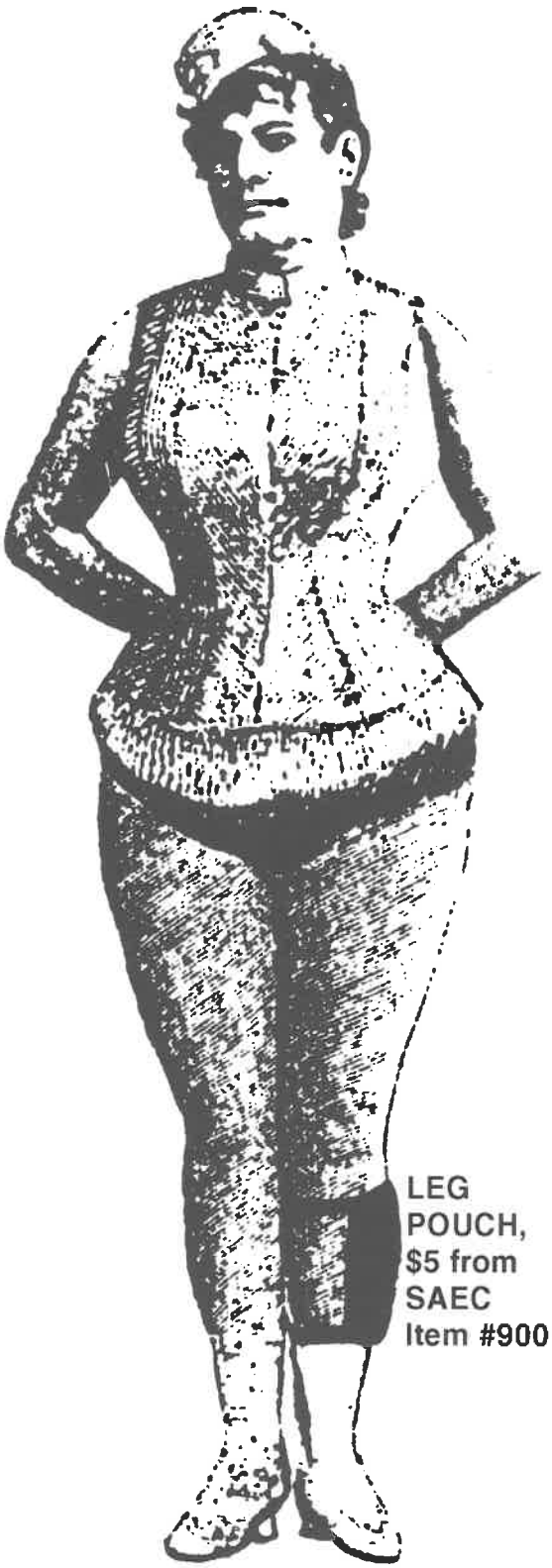
observed this little operation and deftly removed my passport before I reached my stop.



Public Transportation and Markets—Where the Thieves Are

Public transportation offers a variety of prime opportunities for a heist. The examples are endless:

A man from Vermont spent weeks photographing the wonderful people and landscapes in Pomabamba. His bag bulging with hundreds of rolls of film suddenly vanished in the Lima bus terminal—months of work and memories gone in a flash. A promised reward yielded nothing.

In the Guayaquil airport, an underworld denizen nimbly removed from my backpack a handicraft I had purchased a mere fifteen minutes earlier. In the same terminal, friends of mine had a bag carrying their camera equipment spirited off while they chatted before their flight.

In Tarija, Bolivia, I was checking in when someone whisked off my cap of which I was inordinately fond right off of my head.

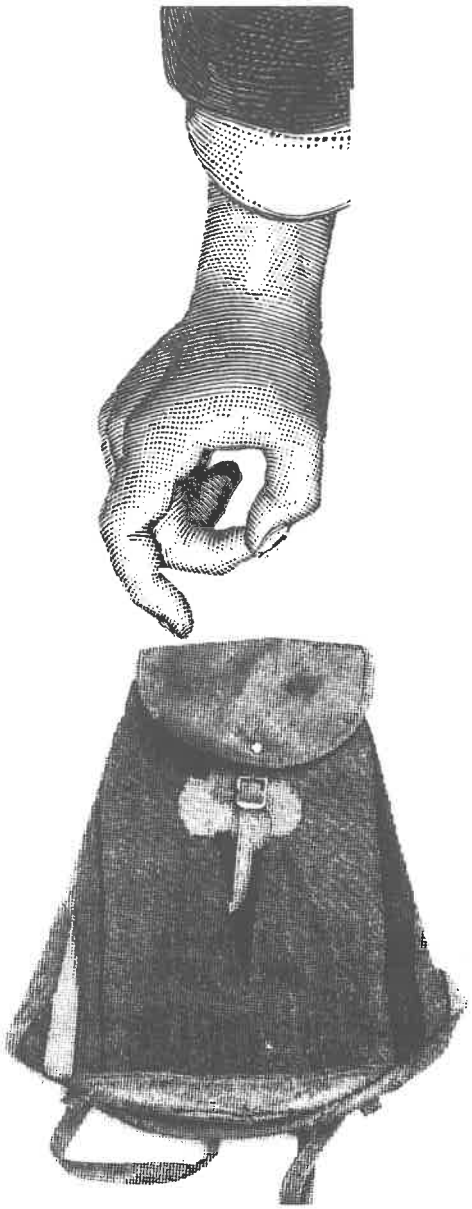
Although an aircraft would not seem a good set up for picking pockets, on a flight to Cusco a crafty-looking granny seated behind me slid her fingers into my back pocket. Feeling the pressure, I whipped around and fixed her with a menacing stare. I was reluctant to create more of a scene, but this sufficed to keep the abuelita *in her place for the rest of the trip.*

Matthew Parris tells of a seemingly nice woman who asked his traveling companion for help to move her boxes—just the distraction needed for her accomplice to make off with his bag and passport.

Lurching over the cold Altiplano between Tirapata and Macusani, Peru, my wife and I accepted the driver's offer to move up front into the warm cab. One of our two duffles left in the back disappeared. There were twenty or so campesinos *in the back, but none willing to identify the culprit.*

Travelers in transit, unless they have their own wheels, pass through truck stops, train stations, bus depots, and airports—crowded places where they are preoccupied with finding a taxi, locating a bathroom, getting to a connecting flight, etc. Thieves sizing up their marks wait for the right moment to pounce. Luggage momentarily set down disappears into thin air.

Gangs periodically hit packed city buses and inter-city trains, harvesting wallets from unsuspecting passengers. One thief crowds the victim while his partner performs the more delicate work of extracting the valuables. Of course, pickpockets often work alone.



Trains are a rewarding milieu for crooks to ply their trade. All sorts of people amble up and down the aisles and move between coaches while, lulled by the clickety-clack monotony, passengers lower their guard. When the train slows down on a steep grade, a thief will strike, then jump off. Dark tunnels offer other opportunities. Night trains in particular have gained a sinister reputation for roving gangs that pilfer while you sleep. The ten-hour night run between Arequipa and Puno enjoys a special notoriety. In successive editions, the *SAH* claims that fully 80 percent of the passengers get robbed—a scary statistic.

Travel in the back of the truck is more confined and for this reason somewhat safer than train travel. Although trucks make frequent stops, you at least get to see who gets on and off. Still, travelers beware.

gemilero (a stealer of light bulbs)

The chaos of a bustling market provides good hunting for thieves who correctly assume you're carrying money or you wouldn't be there. Even locals get shorn regularly in marketplaces, but foreigners wandering around savoring the sights, sounds, and smells are more enticing targets. In the hubbub and crush of people, criminals often work in pairs. One thief jostles the trekker while the other slits the backpack. In the 1980s, Jacques Cousteau's hapless crew waded into the Cusco market. Thief heaven! Bags got slashed, pockets rummaged, and pride hurt.

Thieves: the Low-Down

Spanish has many names to distinguish the different types of thief. *Ladrón* is the all- inclusive term—one that every foreign traveler should know. *Pillo* refers collectively to all kinds of roguish behavior. *Ratero*, or crook, is taken from the rodent of the same name. *Pericote*, *pianista*, *choro* and *jalisco* are a few of the slang terms used by the underworld to describe themselves. Some terms describe particular talents or levels of skill: *carterista* (a specialist in stealing *carteras* or billfolds), *lancero* (one who works crowds), *gemilero* (a stealer of light bulbs), *correvolando* (a very clever thief), *tombero* (one who picks padlocks), *punga* or *punguista* (one who picks pockets particularly on public transportation). The work of a highly skilled thief is praised as *muy fino*. A simple act of grab-and-snatch is said to be an *arranch*, but one pulled off with particular skill—a *puntazo*.

Thieves tend to be between 18 to 35 years old. Men predominate. Thievery is a trade requiring native intelligence to master. Some thieves use cocaine—not surprising given the tension inherent in this line of work. Drugs and theft often become a vicious circle—thieving to support a habit leading to a frenzy of stealing.

rank amateurs who have chosen the life of a delinquent over digging potatoes in the family *chacra*

Accomplished thieves possess what the underworld calls a sense of "grift." Without this special talent for crime and the cunning that goes along with it, an aspiring thief cannot hope to prosper in his chosen racket. An inspired thief will possess good judgment in spotting the mark, discerning where to find the valuables, and executing the deed with appropriate timing, dexterity, and misdirection. The heist itself generally takes less than ten seconds. A considerably lower level of expertise is required to slashing a knapsack or suitcase. Lower still is the skill required to grab and run—a strategem invariably adopted by rank amateurs who have chosen the life of a delinquent over digging potatoes in the family *chacra*.

Thieves working in gangs (*pandilla*) choreograph their crimes having learned that a three- person team can pull off crimes that transcend the aspirations of a thief working alone. One such scam is the Please-Let-Me-Clean-Off-This-Filth-On-Your-Coat trick. Almost unknown before the 1970s, many a tourist fell prey to this ploy until warnings by victims made travelers wary. The police in Spain view this particular ruse as a New World import introduced to Europe by Latin *ladrones*. The Money Drop is also a popular scam. Here a thief drops a wad of bills and, as the victim stoops to pick it up, a second thief makes off with his backback, money, or whatever.

Whatever the ploy, many crooked practitioners have honed their skills to a fine art and might well make first-rate magicians. The finesse of these predators not infrequently evokes a tinge of admiration from their victims, so elegant is their performance compared to the brute force characteristic of their North American partners in crime.

Who gets ripped off?

Andean thieves are equal-opportunity robbers, preying on locals and visitors alike. It is the rare Peruvian, Bolivian or Ecuadorian, rich or poor, who has not at one time or another been robbed. Still, foreign travelers are more appealing targets: The scruffy bearded gringo with holes in his jeans is far from home and more than likely carrying a tidy bundle somewhere on his *cuerpo*. A fat wallet might be worth a year of honest work. A foreigner's bag is apt to be stuffed with valuables—choice stuff like a Japanese camera, maybe binoculars or a tape recorder—all easily fenced. Stolen goods may show up for sale before the victim leaves town. Rings, watches, and other jewelry are all targets, but the best prize is U.S. currency—untraceable, instantly convertible, worth a fortune in local currency.

"It could never happen to me," they think—until it does.

In addition, foreign travelers are most vulnerable to dupery. They are out of their cultural element, hailing from countries where bag slashing and pickpocketing are not everyday concerns. A New Yorker might expect to be mugged, but is certainly not prepared to have his backpack slashed—a crime virtually unknown in the United States and Europe. For some, warnings about pickpockets, purse snatchers, and slashers don't seem real. "It could never happen to me," they think—until it does.

Robbery: The Aftermath

Once robbed, a victim must deal with a storm of emotions. It starts with disbelief. Bewilderment quickly changes to outrage. What happens next depends on the individual: Some lash out, others may blame themselves. Usually, the thieves are long gone; it's the bystanders who witness the wreching, sometimes hostile, reaction. Fecklessness by the locals increases the acute distress.

The victim asks, "Didn't anyone around here see what happened? Who did it?" Often, says the *SAH* bluntly, "The police and local people seem unwilling to help."

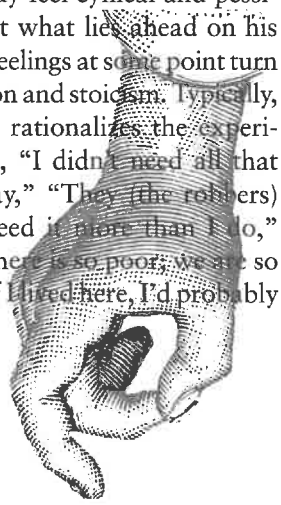
There's a reason for this: There's little the police can do. Petty crimes go largely unsolved. In fact, few police anywhere are likely to track down a clever thief. The criminal must be caught in the act. For many police, investigating petty thefts is not

worth the effort. It's also not unheard of that the police know the perpetrators and wink at their activities in certain areas as long as they rob the tourists and not the local citizenry. The police might expect a kickback for their tolerance. But aside from a few bad apples most police will arrest thieves caught in the act.

Why are bystanders unlikely to help? For one thing, empathy with strangers is not natural in the Andes. Fear of retribution is also a possibility, since the crooks may be known in the neighborhood. Finally, complicity should not be ruled out. This didn't occur to me back in 1986 when I caught a woman cutting my bag with a butcher knife in the Quito market. As I swung around, I hit her on the back. Her yelps brought the surrounding vendors rushing to her assistance. Faced with this phalanx of solidarity, I hastily retreated.

It's interesting to note that thievery is viewed quite differently in Africa. In contrast with the Andes, thieves are energetically pursued, and if caught *in flagrante delicto*, onlookers will pummel them. There are many cases of thieves being beaten to death. This being the case, give me the Andes any day—lynch mob hysteria is far scarier than bystander apathy.

The victim of a robbery receiving no available assistance or even empathy may feel cynical and pessimistic about what lies ahead on his trip. These feelings at some point turn to resignation and stoicism. Typically, the traveler rationalizes the experience saying, "I didn't need all that stuff anyway," "They (the robbers) probably need it more than I do," "Everyone here is so poor, we are so rich," or "If I lived here, I'd probably rob, too."



Danger Zones

Your chances of getting robbed in Peru are higher by far than in either Ecuador and Bolivia. The reasons for this are the larger number of foreigners visiting Peru, an upsurge in lawlessness surrounding the drug trafficking, and a recent history of terrorism. Heed travel warnings and keep your guard up, but don't be detered from experiencing this enchanting country. Life is short, and some things are worth the risk.

For obvious reasons, petty thievery predominates in the big cities, the anonymity of crowds and affluent targets attracting the professional thieves. Downtown Lima, Quito, and Guayaquil have all gotten bad press, but after spending a lot of time in Guayaquil recently, it's reputation seems somewhat undeserved. On the other hand, compared to Quito and Lima, La Paz is the safest city, quite possibly because its thief population trails in the thieving arts.

like an assembly-line chicken, wrung, hosed down, and plucked

One of the worst places in Quito is the area around the church of San Francisco, so close to God, yet teeming with sinners. Thieves here include women with babies (dolls, maybe?) on their backs. Vendors crowd the atrium in front of the church. You have to manoeuver around their tables stacked with candles and religious paraphernalia. These obstructions create choke points. As described in Thurston Clarke's *Equator: a Journey*, shoppers and visitors to the church emerge from a gauntlet feeling "like an assembly-line chicken, wrung, hosed down, and plucked."

Cusco has arguably become the rip-off navel of the Andean world for the simple reason that, on most days, it hosts more overseas visitors in a smaller area than any other city in western South America. When mass tourism from Europe focused on Cusco in the 1970s, it attracted upwardly-mobile pickpockets from all over Peru.

While Cusco is the South American mecca for tourists, other Andean cities such as the Peruvian cities of Puno, Juliaca, Huancayo, Arequipa, and Trujillo, and Cochabamba in Bolivia, have achieved notoriety. By contrast, Ecuador's provincial cities seem safer. Perhaps the local talent heads for Quito.

Thievery is not restricted to towns and cities. Where travelers go—to beaches, mountains, archaeological sites—thieves follow. When travelling in Latin America, best be wary.

Thievery: the Whys and Wherefores

People thieve for different reasons. Fear was the motive behind an incident that occured in 1865. In the remote village of Pichigua in the Department of Cusco, a thief purloined a precious notebook belonging to the great explorer Antonio Raimondi. The whole village was more or less drunk, which made it impossible for the authorities to do much of anything. Much distressed over his loss and unable to find the culprit, Raimondi left for Cusco, where he reported the theft. Six months later, Raimondi got his notebook back. It seems the locals feared that he had come to the village to compile a list of taxable citizens. Emboldened by repeated infusions of *aguardiente*, the townsfolk figured they could impede the imposition of the hated tax if the notebook got "lost."

Of course, the prime motive for

thievery is material gain. It is common these days to explain away thievery. People are said to steal because they are poor. Needing to eat and having no gainful employment, they steal because they have to. This lofty rationale is in fact the standard explanation thieves give when caught in the act—a neat trick, for it transfers the guilt of the thief to the victim who gets robbed because he's rich. Cousteau bought into this theory. His reaction to being robbed was to pontificate, announcing that in "the impoverished Andes...desperation begets minor desperados." And, indeed, such thinking appears reasonable. However, in poorer parts of the world, notably Africa, petty thievery is relatively uncommon. Moreover, need is not necessarily a justification, for the thieves are rarely totally down-and-out and wondering where their next meal is coming from.

A similar though equally flawed theory holds that theft grows out of resentment, envy, dislike, or even a hatred of foreigners. Cousteau opined that Andean people might confuse the foreign traveler with notions of the Devil, a superstition that resulted from their "near-absolute isolation that enforces their fear of the outside world." In fact, however, Andean people by and large do not resent the foreigners in their midst. This is not to say there may not exist reasons to dislike visitors who are condescending, disrespectful by local standards, or conduct themselves scandalously. However, it's unlikely that rancor would inspire an honest citizen to turn to crime.

Though practiced by a minority, thievery is to some degree sanctioned by the culture. Thievery fits into a peasant's view of life that goes back 2,000 years. One feature characteristic of this rural philosophy is a perception that regards all good things as limited in quantity. In other words, there is only one pie. It can be cut up in many slices but not made bigger. By this reasoning, you get money or goods at someone else's expense. Survival becomes a matter of getting what you can. Thievery is just one of many methods of acquisition, a strategy to better one's state, not a desperate act of last resort. True, the consequences of getting caught arouse some concern to the Andean mind, but the Christian catechism notwithstanding, stealing is not deemed particularly immoral.

Letting Go

There's a philosophical dimension to getting ripped off that's worth considering. True, at the moment, a robbery is not just terrible for what is stolen but for how it makes us feel. Over the long term, however, the experience can change our way of thinking. We come from a consumer culture and may not realize how insidiously material things possess us. Suddenly, we are forced to realize we can do nothing about our loss. Fatalistically, we go about our business, viewing the theft, perhaps, as one of those painful learning experiences. Then, with time, we come to see that what we have lost is not so terribly important. In letting go, we adopt a new attitude—recognizing how material things clutter our lives. An unpleasant experience leads to a new awareness, knowledge that we may cherish for years to come.

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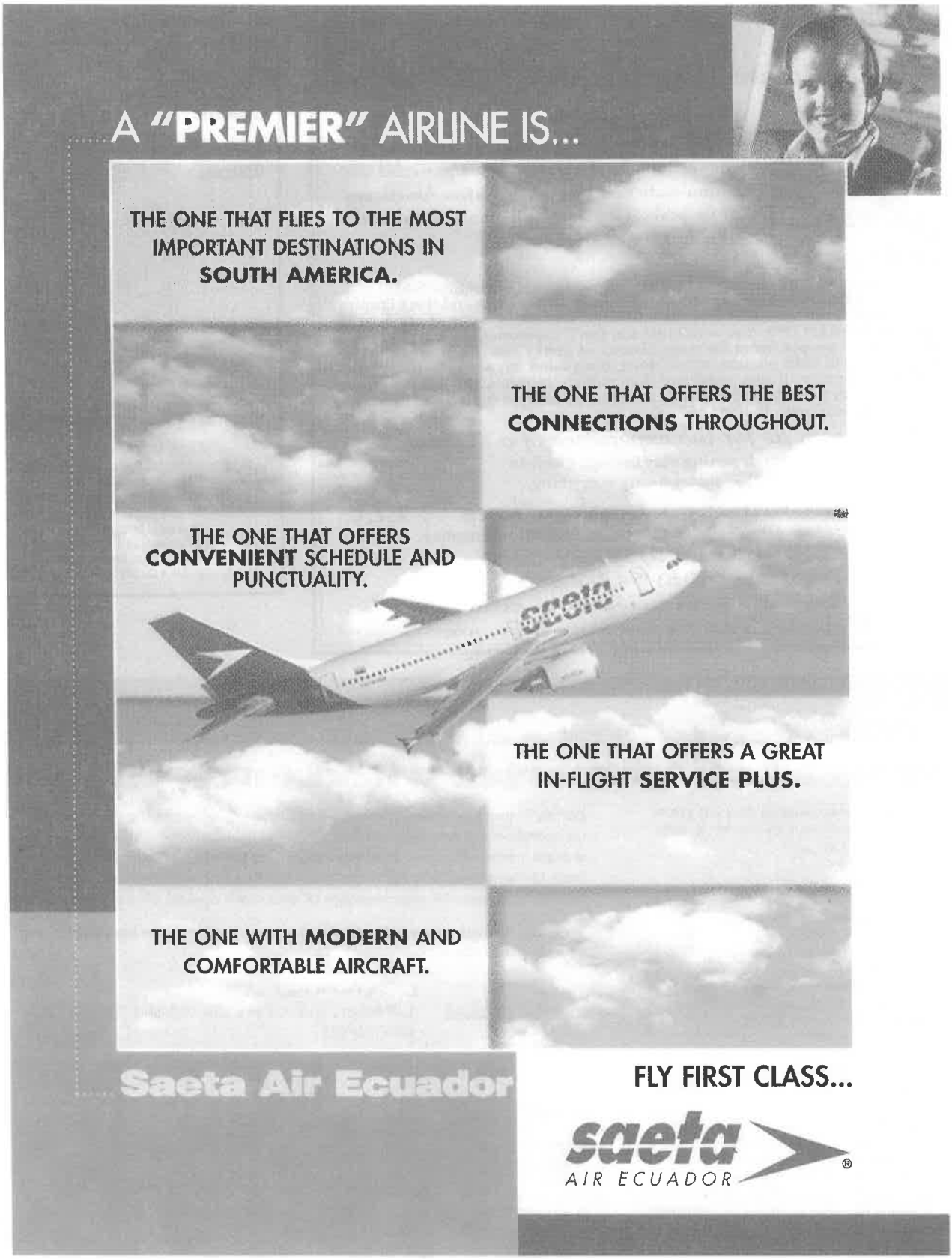
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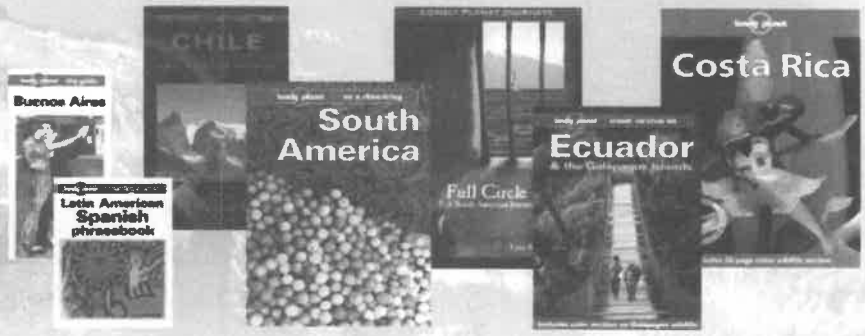


Continued from page 11.

Jaime appears from the kitchen. He rubs Eddy's afflicted arm and is trying to get the older man's attention when Harlan notices our approach. Harlan stands. Except for his disproportionately thin arms, he is extremely fit. Dark curls surround his crisp, blue eyes.

"Do you remember Orlando?" I ask.

Harlan stares in silence until recognition spreads in a smile. "But, Orlando," he says, "You are so old and gray!"

MARION: Sometimes I wonder if Harlan and Stephen might even be healthier now than if they'd just gone on the way they were going before they got sick. They eat well, now. They exercise. They do all the right things, which they might never have bothered with if they hadn't had this thing thrown upon them. Coming here was incredibly good for them.

After Eddy had his stroke, the boys, apparently, had this discussion. They decided that Harlan would come down here with Elizabeth and then we would join them and give Stephen a break. He'd been the one playing nursemaid.

It must be terrible to feel you're not complete. Eddy's always saying, "Oh, I can't use my arm. Oh, do you think I'm going to be all right?" And then I think of these kids of ours. What they went through for 20 years. You never hear a peep out of them about being disabled. They never said, "Oh, I can't walk, oh I can't use my arms." Never heard them complain.

And Harlan's gotten very strong, you know. Even though he's got very thin arms. I mean, look how he draws—designs beautiful buildings. He can dress himself. He couldn't do those things before. And I talked to Stephen today. He says he's discovered how to improve the way he's walking. Something he found out through a swing.

JAIME: What effect, the things I did with Stephen and Harlan—and the things they have done to help themselves—have had, is very difficult to determine. They would have to go back and live it all over again, and not do these things to compare. But, I think it helped them. I think it helped them a lot.

a witch doctor beat Stephen with the metal plant

HARLAN: After Ecuador, both Stephen and I, sometimes together and sometimes independently, continued to go on various kinds of excursions to different areas, always looking for the cure. In Colombia, a witch doctor beat Stephen with the metal plant, *ortego*, to stimulate his circulation. In Mexico, a *brujo* I visited gave me a cup to take to the slaughter house, to catch the blood when they cut a bull's throat and drink it fresh. I didn't feel that was the right approach for me. We've been to the Yucatán, Guatemala, some parts of the Caribbean, and out West.

A bolt of lightning hit so close I could feel its heat.

Never found the magic plant or the philosopher's stone or whatever. But my health has been steadily improving over the years. It's a slow process in both directions. I think you're always spiraling up or spiraling down. Nothing is static in life. You can never hold a position.

I guess everything has its duality—its good and its bad. And that's just the way it is. You would think that it should be possible to have all the positive effects without going through the negative. But maybe it's not.

The day we buried Michael, at the cemetery up on the hill, it was a relatively clear day. Then, immediately as the casket touched the ground, it started to pour. We all ran down the hill. My cabin was just below the cemetery and a bolt of lightning hit so close I could feel its heat. Everyone who went down to Jaime's saw the lightning bolt hit the grave. And after the lightning bolt hit, the sun came out and this amazing rainbow appeared. I've never seen anything quite like that.

We went to the river the next day, together but in solitary moods. I found Jaime leaning against some rocks, his bare feet in the cold water. He said it was keeping him on the earth, keeping him from flying away. I told him what the Indian woman told me the morning my fever broke. How she had said there was something bad going on here and that she was leaving. And how I walked out of my cabin to see Jaime running out of his cabin, yelling, his shirt bloodied. And how I thought he had been stabbed.

It wasn't until I told him this that we both came to the same conclusion that whatever evil thing had been in me, the evil presence she had been so scared of, had left me and gone into Michael.

JAIME: We need to experience suffering. Suffering and difficulties should bring out the best in us, eventually. And, perhaps, some suffering saves us from even worse suffering. We don't know. We just have to trust the system. You can call it magic,

God, nature—it doesn't matter what you call it. It has our best interests in mind.

Do I think it's working as it should? Do I think it's beneficial, what they're going through? What I've been through? I think so. If it's happening, it's happening for our own good.

Miami Beach; February 10, 1997:

It is dusk. Stephen has patiently waited for his turn on the playground swings. The wind whips the sands. He swings in the wind, forcing his weak legs up into the air. Tossing his head back, he belts out his name and age in a high, operatic voice. Then he looks concerned.

"You're not getting your swinging in," he says.

"I got some swinging in earlier," I say.

"Okay, then ask questions and I will respond. Do you want a serious, somber tone?" In his family's absence he's been working on a screen play for the first time since his health plummeted ten years ago.

"Your normal voice would be fine."

"Because I can do somber. Or melancholy."

"I know you can."

"You know, I think the main thing I learned from being sick is that I didn't want to be sick. And the main thing I learned from suffering is I didn't want to suffer. There are karmic forces that are beyond the scope of an individual life, but the way you respond to those forces is not predetermined.

"Going to Madre Tierra started me on a phase of wandering, discovery, self-exploration, and relaxation. That was a ten-year phase that ended with my Dad's stroke. I'm still learning to relax, but I'm once again dealing with work, art, my Dad.

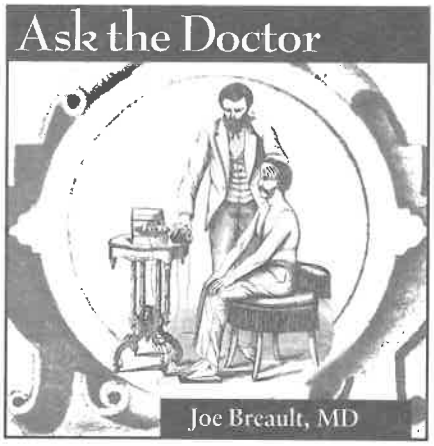
"It seems wonderfully appropriate that my parents are down there now. And that they are receiving that kind of unqualified support that I once got there, when I needed it.

"Life is so much like a Dickens novel. The characters meet at different times in their lives, and sometimes in different combinations and the feeling of that is so wonderful. Like there's a connection between certain people that has nothing to do with our own machinations, our own strivings, or our own speeds. It has to do with some kind of karmic configuration that brings us into contact with one another and cements our destiny together."

Back in Stephen's garden, I photograph him playing the guitar. He strikes theatrical poses. "Now one of us," he says. The motion he uses to stand up is much like that of a newborn foal, rocking back, then forward.

I set the automatic timer. Stephen grabs an African head statue from the table. Cradling it between us he says, "This can be our poor, deformed baby." He gives the camera a winning smile, and the shutter clicks.

To contact Jaime Mendoza and for more information about Madre Tierra in Vilcabamba, call 593-7-580269 or e-mail hmtierra@ecua.net.ec.



Dr. Joseph Breault graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine with combined MD and MPHTM (Tropical Medicine) degrees. Currently the staff physician at the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, he has previously worked at the PHS Indian Hospitals in South Dakota and overseas in the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

Malaria

Q: I'm going to South America. Do I have to take anti-malarial medicine?

A: You should take antimalarial pills if you are traveling to an area of malaria risk. Determine this by finding a specific country's status through the CDC (1-888-232-3228 or internet webpage http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbk/yfquery.htm) or consult your doctor/travel clinic. If you're not going into areas with malaria, then no pills are needed.

Q: What pills should I take for malaria?

A: Chloroquine, if the malaria is not chloroquine-resistant. In the Western Hemisphere, the CDC recommends chloroquine in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Central America west of the Panama Canal, Paraguay, parts of Peru, and Argen-

tina. This may change, so consult the CDC web pages or your doctor/travel clinic for the latest information before leaving.

Mefloquine is usually used in chloroquine resistant areas; Doxycycline is an alternative if you cannot take mefloquine. Take prophylaxis once a week, starting one week before you enter a malarial zone and continue for 4 weeks after leaving it. Talk to your doctor before you go about which medication to take and to get your prescriptions. Some may want to start medicines 2-4 weeks before leaving so that any side effects can be discovered and discussed with your doctor before you leave.

Q: Will I get side effects from malaria pills?

A: Most people take antimalarial pills without problems. Side effects of chloroquine and mefloquine may be upset stomach, headache, dizziness, blurred vision, strange dreams, and itching. These do not usually require stopping the drug. More serious effects can occur with mefloquine so it should not be used if you have either a psychiatric or seizure disorder or are taking a beta blocker or other drugs that affect cardiac conduction. Scuba divers should probably avoid mefloquine. Doxycycline may make you more prone to vaginal yeast infections (bring vaginal yeast creams with you) and sunburns (use a hat and extra sunblock). Doxycycline should not be used by children under 8 years of age or pregnant women.

Q: What else can I do to prevent malaria?

A: Avoiding infected mosquitoes is the most important way of preventing malaria. If possible, stay inside between dusk and dawn, the time when mosquitoes are most active. Don't wear dark colored clothing, perfume, cologne, or after-shave—these attract mosquitoes. Wear clothes that cover most of your body, stay in well screened areas when possible, and use mosquito netting. Consider soaking 16 x 18 mesh bed nets and clothing in permethrin. Permethrin is an insecticide that lasts 5 to 10 washings. Don't use it on your skin. Instead, use 30-35% DEET insect repellent on your skin (6-10% on kids). DEET is almost free of side effects in adults; however, in children, 20% DEET has been known to cause staggering, agitation, tremors, slurred speech, convulsions and death—take the 6-10% DEET dose for kids seriously. Some creative parents have sewn together a body suit of mosquito netting soaked in permethrin for their kids to wear over their clothes. DEET repellents dissolve plastic—keep them away from cameras.

Q: If I'm pregnant or breast feeding, what should I do?

A: Malaria can be more severe in pregnant women. This makes prevention even more important. If possible, defer travel to malaria areas. Neither mefloquine nor chloroquine has been shown to have a harmful effect on the fetus. However, mefloquine has not been well studied in pregnancy and many discourage its use at all during pregnancy, especially in the first trimester. Chloroquine is generally regarded as safe in pregnancy. The tiny amount of these drugs secreted in breast milk is not harmful to a breast-feeding infant. However, the doses are too low to prevent malaria in the infant.

Q: What should I do if I think I have malaria?

A: At the beginning, malaria may resemble the flu: fever, headaches, muscle aches, and malaise. Symptoms may develop from 1 week to months after being bitten by an infected mosquito. If you develop all these symptoms or even if you come down with just a fever during or after travel in an area with malaria risk, you should promptly consult a doctor. Treatment is very effective in malaria's early stages, but consequences can be serious (even fatal) if treatment is delayed. So if there is no professional medical care available for more than a day, self-treatment is a good temporary measure. Typically, you should take three tablets of Fansidar if you've been taking chloroquine and are not allergic to sulfa. You should still see a doctor as soon as possible, and continue your chloroquine schedule even after self-treatment. For those taking mefloquine, the high dose of mefloquine needed for treatment can cause serious neurologic side effects in 1 out of 1700, so self-treatment is usually not recommended.

Q: Where can I find out more information about malaria?

A: CDC information is available at 1-888-232-3228 or at www.cdc.gov on the internet. *The Travel & Tropical Medicine Manual* by Drs. Elaine C. Jong & Russell McMullen lists travel clinics in its appendix.

You can e-mail medical questions to Dr. Breault at **joebreault@worldnet.att.net.**
A selection of questions will be answered and published in future issues of the *South American Explorer.*

INCREASED ULTRAVIOLET IN SOUTH AMERICA?

If you have knowledge of or have experienced **severely sunburned skin** or **sore eyes**, please contact:

Jim Scanlon, 199 Canal Street #8, San Rafael, CA 94901
jscanlon@linex.com
leave msg 415-485-0540

SAEC in cyberspace
http://www.samexplo.org

Interested in volunteering in South America? Research volunteer organizations before you leave home! The following web sites can help you find an organization that needs your help. For more non-profit and volunteer organizations on the web, click on "Other Interesting Web Sites" on the South American Explorers Club home page.

Volunteers for Peace
http://www.vfp.org

Work on an irrigation project in Ecuador. Renovate the Fortaleza de Sao Jose de Macapa in Brazil. Clean up Chile's National Parks. Help endangered turtles on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. A week at these Volunteer for Peace (VFP) "workcamps" costs around $175 per week and covers food, lodging, and program fees. Browse the VFP home page for descriptions of volunteer opportunities, VFP membership, and the *1998 International Workcamp Directory*.

Council on International Educational Exchange
http://www.ciee.org/vol/index.htm

Join a project that benefits a local community and gives you an opportunity to meet volunteers from different countries. Check out this site to get lists of these summer South American projects where participants spend two to four weeks living, working, and learning.

The Central America Volunteer Guide
http://www.tmn.com/wwwanderer/volguide/projects.html

The creator of this site approached communities in Central America and asked how international volunteers could help. Their responses are listed on this site. If you're interested in small grassroots projects, this page is a great source of contact names, numbers, and addresses in Central American countries.

Flying Doctors of America
http://home.navisoft.com/vip/flyingdoctorsofamerica.htm

Are you a health care professional? Can you speak Spanish? The Flying Doctors of America need you! Their short-term medical mercy missions in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America bring much-needed health care to poor, rural areas.

Directory on International Voluntary Service
http://www.astro.virginia.edu/~rd7a/morelinks.html

Type in this URL and get an incredible number of links grouped by geographical area and short- or long-term voluntary service. The site also includes general information on volunteering, finding opportunities abroad, non-profit resources, and international youth organizations.

WorldTeach
http://www.igc.org/worldteach

World Teach is a non-profit organization which places volunteers overseas to teach English, math, science, and environmental education in developing countries. You don't have to speak a foreign language or have previous teaching experience, but potiential volunteers must have a bachelor's degree. Answers to frequently asked questions, program fees, host country details, and the WorldTeach application are available on line.

Partners of the Americas
http://www.partners.net

Partners of the Americas is a network of volunteers from Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States working to improve the lives of people throughout the Americas. Their web site covers volunteer opportunities in education, culture, agriculture and the environment, women, children and families, disaster preparedness, and leadership training.

AmeriSpan
http://www.amerispan.com

AmeriSpan's award-winning site offers Latin American volunteer and internship descriptions ranging from teaching English as a second language to internships at various Latin American organizations. AmeriSpan claims many of their recommended agencies provide room and board for their volunteers.

A Postcard from Home

by Robert Runyard

It was February of 1978, some where south of Buenos Aires, a couple of hours riding. I say "riding" because I was on a 650 Yamaha twin-cylinder motorcycle I'd ridden down from from Medellin.

I remember I was somewhere near San Miguel del Monte, but after all these years it's hard to be sure, and maybe I never even knew at the time. In Argentina, the towns seemed caught in a time warp with their characteristic European statues, wrought iron, and invariably, a plaza. There'd been so many weathered towns just like it—the main buildings made of wood somehow reminiscent of a Kansas prairie town, circa 1930. The highway bypassed most of these towns. By road, Argentina was an asphalt ribbon leading straight toward an endless horizon.

On that day I could have made better time, but I spent most of the afternoon in Caldarella's immaculate garage, carefully levering a new rubber tire onto its rim. In those days, tubeless tires were unknown and bikes used tubes. Installation was an exercise in precision. A slip meant two little holes like fang marks in the thin rubber tube. There was a saying that every time you inserted the tool, you gave the snake another chance.

It was February. The austral summer sunlight stretched out across the grasslands with a rich golden glow like beach-tanned skin inviting...no...*seducing* you to ride and ride a little longer until you found yourself alone deep in the empty plains, low on fuel, hungry and bedless in a world gone suddenly monochrome and cold. An oily crust of bugs has built up on your helmet visor, and you're unwilling to pitch your tent in the narrow patch between the pavement and the barbed wire, the way you did when you were really young and genuinely destitute.

No, I stopped instead at a small hotel, one star removed from a stable. It was cheap—and cheap would get me to Tierra del Fuego without sleeping on the ground all the time. The low room was made of planks and spiderwebs, lit by a bare bulb of the lowest possible wattage. A shed with a washing machine stood in a corner of the large dirt courtyard.

Something had gone dreadfully wrong.

In the Argentine backcountry, you forget about politics. In the late seventies Chile and Argentina were saddled with their military governments and engaged in their "dirty wars." If I'd heard anything about the *desaparecidos*, the nameless casualties, it caused little concern. Sure, I took pictures of things I shouldn't have, but if I hadn't thought myself immune from harm, I certainly wouldn't have borrowed a motorcycle for crissake, and set out to ride to the end of the Southern Hemisphere. The power behind this quest exhausted the understanding of those satisfied with lesser mythologies and safer pursuits.

On a 650 Yamaha twin-cylinder motorcycle I'd ridden down from from Medellin.

Not even the grisly parts of a body I came across one morning in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile altered my determination to see where the road ended.

Unloading the bike was always a chore with certain dangers. Fatigue diminishes judgment and dexterity, and every elastic Bungee cord becomes a loaded pistol aimed at your face. I hardly noticed the dark, covered truck that drove into the courtyard until several troops jumped down nearby. Then, the officer in charge strode by my motorcycle. Without thinking, I remarked in a friendly manner, "Well, we're safe now. The Army is here."

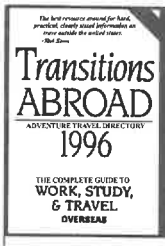
At that, the officer wheeled back toward me, leather notebook in hand, pistol on hip. The steely look told me immediately that I ought to have kept my mouth shut. "Who are you?" he snapped. I mumbled something, smiling the while, hoping to establish that essential amiable link. "Where are you from? What are you doing here?" he demanded, evincing no interest in a travelogue, let alone a friendly overture. For several desperate moments, in broken and halt-

Robert Runyard is a systems analyst and South American Explorers Club member who lives in Colorado.

ing Spanish, I described my 15,000 kilometer trip and the pictures I took along the way. "Pictures of what?" he pressed. Suddenly, I felt uncomfortable, surrounded. For a time I stumbled on, wondering how to politely say, "You know...pictures of the goddamn scenery." Then it hit me. Something had gone dreadfully wrong.

The officer curtly pointed to the little washing-room shed nearby with its bare bulb burning inside. He followed me as I made my way toward the shed. Then, I heard it. I was certain that sound was the officer unsnapping his holster. My hands instantly chilled. I couldn't breathe. Acutely conscious of the fatal movement behind me, I marveled at the absurdity of it all. So, after all that's happened this, I thought to myself, is how it all ends.

Once inside the little room I turned around. The officer was busy writing in his notebook. "Please," he said, tearing out a page and handing it to me, "send me a postcard when you get back to your country."



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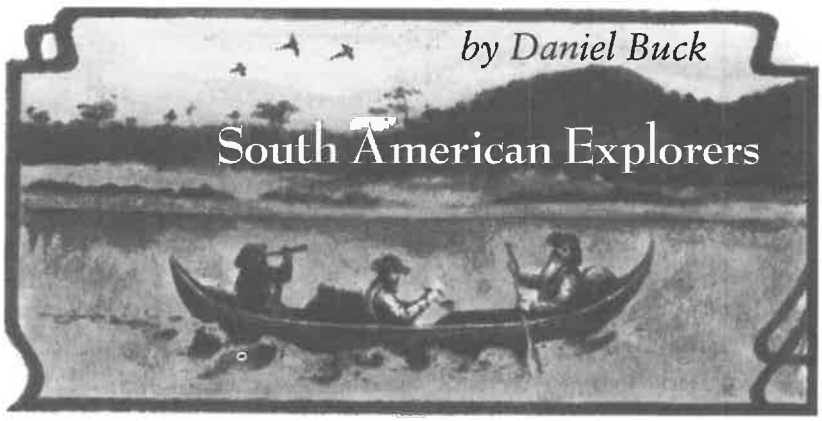


Robert Shippee & George R. Johnson Aerial Exploration of Peru

In early 1931, two orange monoplanes circled the Peruvian skies over the ruined city of Chan-Chan. Powered by supercharged Whirlwind engines for high-altitude flying above the Andes, the Bellanca Pacemakers, christened the *Washington* and the *Lima*, belonged to the Shippee-Johnson Peruvian Expedition of 1930-1931. The team of young Americans, none older than 30, had a keen interest in aviation, photography, and adventure. Foreshadowing Indiana Jones, the men wore fedoras, khaki shirts with dark ties, leather jackets, khaki slacks or jodhpurs, and riding boots. The co-leaders were Robert Shippee, second pilot and historian, and George R. "Tuck" Johnson, chief photographer and pilot.

As a lad growing up in the early 1900s, Johnson became interested in aerial photography. He put those skills to use during service in World War I with the U.S. Army in France. After the war, Johnson worked as the head aerial photographer for the Peruvian Naval Air Service. He spent more than a year criss-crossing Peru, collecting images of the coastal deserts, the Andes, and the eastern lowlands. Some of his photographs—among them views of the Colca Canyon, which Johnson is credited with discovering—can be found in *Peru from the Air*, published by the American Geographical Society in 1930.

Shippee, a wealthy twenty-year old Harvard graduate, geology major, Hasty Pudding member, and pilot, had never been to Peru before the expedition. He and Johnson both lived in New Jersey and probably first met as pilots at the Red Bank Airport. This is where the expedition was organized and embarked from, but precisely what inspired it is a mystery. Shippee raised the considerable funds needed for the adventure—estimated at $150,000, more than one million dollars today—from his friends and family. The American Geographic Society and the National Geographic Society also contributed to what became officially known as the Shippee-Johnson Peruvian Expedition. Shippee's fund-raising prowess won the youth top billing over the thirty-year-old war veteran and aerial photographer.

Soon after arriving in Peru, Shippee cabled the *New York Times*: "So far, our actual work in the field is hardly worth mentioning." Eight months later, the team had racked up 454 hours in the air, taken several thousand oblique and vertical photographs, shot 30,000 feet of movie film, discovered the Great Wall of Peru, mapped Chan-Chan by air, survived two plane crashes, trekked into the lost villages of the Colca Valley, surveyed the Urubamba Valley, and eluded the revolution that overthrew the Leguia government.

Geographer William M. Denevan lauded the expedition as "the first systematic attempt to use aerial photography to discover, locate, and describe prehistoric ruins and agricultural features in South America."

The discovery of the Great Wall demonstrated just how successful such an approach could be: The adobe and stone wall, guarded by fourteen forts, extends from the coast inland about forty miles following a course roughly parallel to the Río Santa. Yet it was unknown even to local residents and eminent Peruvian

Left to right: Shippee, mascot Pibe, and Johnson. (Neg. No. bb-64, Courtesy Department Library Services, American Museum of Natural History).

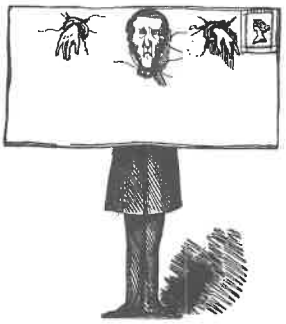
archaeologists like Julio C. Tello until Shippee and Johnson photographed it from the air.

Shippee published several articles about their exploits in the *National Geographic* and the *Geographical Review*, and Lowell Thomas narrated a 1932 documentary, *Wings Over the Andes*, shot by the expedition's cameraman, W.O. Runcie. The 45-minute film bounces around Peru, much as Shippee and Johnson did, blending bird's-eye views of the Callejon de Huaylas, Machu Picchu, and El Misti with ground footage of Cusco markets and Colca Canyon villages. The team's twenty-two day trek into the Colca Canyon is a highlight: Once the gear is loaded onto pack mules (blindfolded to keep them docile), the caravan marches slowly down precipitous mountain trails and over swaying rope bridges. Another highlight is their flight into El Misti's smoking crater where sulfur fumes quickly fill the plane's cockpit.

But the star of *Wings Over the Andes* is the team's mascot, Pibe (Lunfardo for "kid"), a mongrel dog whom Shippee grandly described as a "rare...Inca llama hound." Cavorting in mud holes or nipping at the mules' heels, Pibe steals virtually every scene he's in.

Following his return from Peru, Shippee embarked on a national lecture tour. He died in 1989 after a long career with United Airlines. Johnson's career was considerably shorter. In 1933, his New Jersey National Guard airplane crashed into a home near the Red Bank Airport from where the Shippee-Johnson Expedition had set off only a few years earlier. Johnson, his observer, and all five occupants of the house perished.

Pibe ran off when the expedition's ship docked in New York and was never seen again.



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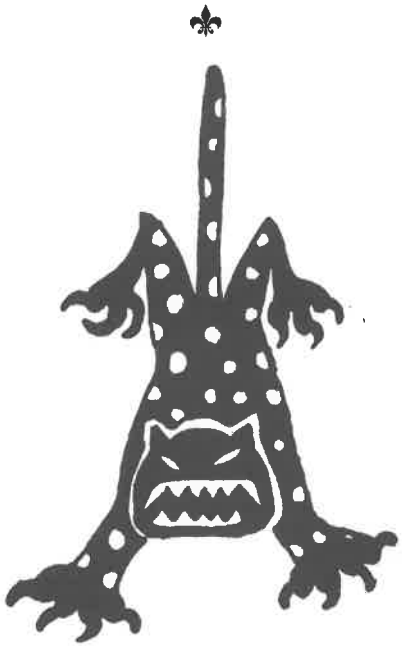

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Lima Club

It's been an eventful quarter at the Lima Clubhouse. We've survived everything from El Niño to La Niña and the yearly SAEC Managers Thinktank.

⚜

El Niño has wreaked havoc in Peru. In February, most areas in northern Peru saw at least one landslide. Roads and bridges collapsed, and the landscape eroded. Still, El Niño created a notable geographical site—Laguna La Niña now rates as Peru's second largest lake covering a sandy area 6000 meters square on the desert plains north of Chiclayo. Even without further rain, it will take 3 to 5 years to evaporate. It has already become a stopover on the flight paths of various migratory birds.

⚜

The beautification of central Lima, Peru's capital, continues apace. The city has done wonders cleaning up the main plazas. Fresh coats of paint and refurbished balconies abound, and flowers and newly planted trees adorn many of the plazas and parks. "*Lima Renace, Su Gente, Lo Hace.*"

SAEC's dear friend and Lima office secretary for the last decade, Ofelia Lopez van Zadel, and her family have left for Holland. They report a smooth transition from the broiling Lima summer to the snowy winter of Holland. We will miss Ofelia, Sandy, and Josef and wish them all the best!

The Lima Clubhouse hosted this year's SAEC summit meeting in Huaraz. Left to right: Tim Currie, Vicky Williamson, Diana Morris, Rick Vecchio, and Melanie Ebertz.

⚜

In the Lima Clubhouse, we have moved our library to the computer room in back and turned the front room into a solarium and resting place. As well, we have rewired the house and acquired a new refrigerator and stove.

⚜

We're also working to improve the library and book exchange and would love any donations of worthy books!

⚜

Lima hosted this year's grand SAEC summit meeting in Huaraz. In addition to the usual dirt and rumors, Clubhouse managers found time to deal with the nitty-gritty and plan for the coming year. Finances, the webpage, trip reports, communication, and growth and expansion came up for discussion while Don Montague, our illustrious founder, popped Tylenol tablets and wondered why he let himself be talked into trudging up 4000m to have a simple conversation.

⚜

A bit about our members: Jorge de Suisse is opening a new restaurant in Huaraz. Lucky Huaraz visitors will be able to jump from Chris Benway's Cafe Andino to Jorge's Bar and More. Kathleen Gasde just finished volunteering with an orphanage outside of Lima. Jan Heisey survived a visit to Disney World and is now safely back in South America collecting info for our Chile packet. George Lau just finished a year in Huaraz working on his doctorate in Archeology. Many thanks to all those members for hand-carrying books and maps between the Clubs!

—Lima Clubhouse Staff

Quito Club

The Wayuu of Venezuela view eclipses as a time when the moon and sun join in an act of love that signifies a victory of woman over man. The moon seduces and overcomes the sun. Many stars are born from their union.

⚜

On February 26, thousands viewed the total eclipse in the Galápagos while the rest of Ecuador saw a 70% eclipse. Both the eclipse and El Niño remind us of our link with nature.

El Niño has brought warmer sea temperatures, crop destruction, health problems, travel delays, flooding, and homelessness. It's hard to say how much longer El Niño will endure, but the people of Ecuador will outlast its fury.

Sheila and Diana ventured south to Peru for the annual SAEC meeting of managers and staff. It was a great opportunity to share ideas and plan the future direction of the Club. Everyone left a little tired after eight days of meetings but exhilarated at the new ideas, plans, and projects.

The SAEC's support of La Tola Centro Campesino goes forward. Diana will be organizing volunteers for the evening science class. Rivers, plants, and animals will be studied and combined with a monthly nature outing. Any help will be greatly appreciated.

Anna, a Quito Clubhouse volunteer, and her husband Pedro celebrated the birth of Paula on December 13,1997. We get to see both Anna and Paula in the clubhouse every morning!

We are sad to say goodbye to Maya and Sim. During their yearlong stay with us, their contribution to the Club has been immense. They returned to Canada to further their studies. Our thanks to the Goldie family from Canada for the four months they helped around the Club. They are continuing their trip around the world. We wish them all the best of luck!

—Quito Clubhouse Staff

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A Rush of Cochineal

Red Dye Brings Riches

by Trisha Thorme

Cochineal has long been a product of Ayacucho. Its introduction into the Chilca region just south of Lima, however, has transformed the region from poverty to prosperity.

Traveling up the Chilca Quebrada we bounce past dusty fields and isolated houses. At every little homestead, the four a.m. truck from Chilca to Huallanche stops. Children with plastic sacks shuffle about while waiting to buy fresh white rolls still warm from the oven in Chilca.

Since sunrise, I've given up trying to sleep. Constantly caroming off of the driver, the ceiling, and the other female passenger, I find it just as easy to stay awake. In the morning light, I watch the *campesinos* working in fields. One farmer cuts away at a cactus, slicing off lengths that are neatly stacked by the side of the road. The fields have been carefully cultivated and terraced. I wonder why when all I can see are fields upon fields of cacti all blighted with hideous white splotches. In the blurred landscape the white patches on the green cacti merge with the chalky stones marking off the fields.

fields of cacti all blighted with hideous white splotches

Don Silvino, the driver, knows everyone along our route. I'm traveling to Huallanche and Santo Domingo de los Olleros to learn about contemporary pottery as part of my research on ancient pottery production, so I ply him with questions. He listens to my queries with a pensive expression. "Ah, yes," he says, so-and-so used to make pottery, but not now. "She's given that up for *cochinilla*," he smiles knowingly.

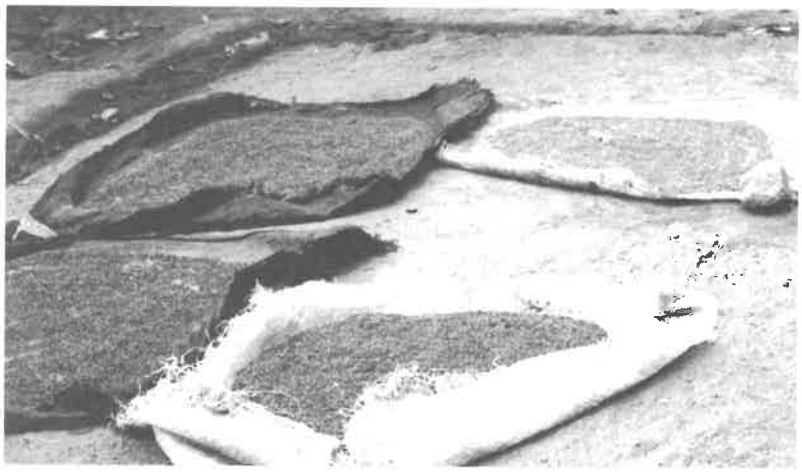
Trisha Thorme is an anthropology student at Cornell University working on her dissertation on Initial Period ceramic production in the coastal Lurín Valley.

A Route of Evanescence
With a revolving Wheel—
A Resonance of Emerald—
A Rush of Cochineal—
And every Blossom on the Bush
Adjusts its tumbled Head—
The mail from Tunis, probably,
An easy Morning's Ride.

—*Emily Dickinson*

The fields have been carefully cultivated and terraced.

The white splotches are secretions of the female cochineal.



Traditionaly sun-dried cochineal brings a higher price.

"Cochineal" refers both to the insect and the dye extracted from the bug.

I've been hearing "*cochinilla*" since I woke up—it's all the driver and my fellow passenger talk about. It turns out the middle-aged woman on my right is a trader from Chilca. She's on her way to buy cochineal, a trip up the quebrada she makes several times a week. The cochineal bug is the source for the vibrant red seen in *mantas* and textiles throughout the Andes. My traveling companion is only too happy to tell me all about this small bug that's making her rich.

Eventually I put two and two together. "Cochineal" refers both to the insect (*Dactylopius coccus*) that infests prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) and the dye extracted from the bug. The white splotches I see everywhere on the cacti in the fields are secretions of the female cochineal that signal a sizeable cochineal population. And cochineal is Peru's highly profitable global export and the reason behind Chilca's explosive economic growth.

Cochineal arrived in Chilca several years ago when two strangers from Ayacucho introduced the parasite to cacti near the San Bartolomé Quebrada. These cochineal pioneers, familiar with the bugs' long history of exploitation in Ayacucho, realized its economic value. Their neighbors, meanwhile, unaware of cochineal and its marketing possibilities, obligingly offered to help rid the fields of this blight that killed the valuable prickly pear cacti.

Indeed, cochineal bugs eventually do suck all life from the cactus plant, leaving behind dry, withered stumps smothered under a cloudy white film. Moreover, in some parts of the world where *Opuntia* cacti threaten to choke out other, more desirable plants, the cochineal insect is used as a biological agent to keep the cactus from spreading..

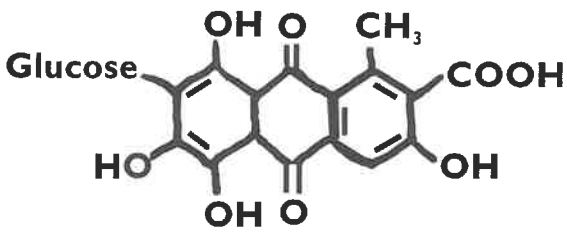
Managing cochineal production is a balancing act—letting the female cochineal suck the life juices from some cacti while cultivating sufficient cacti to act as future hosts. To grow a new cactus, you simply chop off a cactus joint and stick it in the ground. This, of course, scars the parent cactus, but if left to heal, the plant will recover. All this takes planning since a prickly pear cutting takes three years to grow into a good-sized host.

In nature, wingless female cochineal blown on the wind latch onto cacti, but this can also be done by hand. Male insects, much smaller than the females, have wings and are not used for dye production. Female insects produce the best dye when they are on the verge of laying their eggs.

Harvesters remove the females with a knife or a sharpened piece of metal, scraping the bugs off the cottony white deposits. A single cactus stem may yield 2000 female insects weighing up to 20 grams. Once the bug colonies are in full swing, cochineal can be harvested four times a year. An experienced collector can harvest close to two kilograms of insects in a day.

An experienced collector can harvest close to two kilograms of insects in a day.

On this particular weekend in August 1996, the price of cochineal is rising. Barely a week before, the price per kilogram approached 200 soles (at 2.4 soles to the dollar). Now traders are paying 218 soles a kilogram. When you consider the yield of a single cactus or the 120 to 240 kg annual yield per hectare, all this activity translates into big bucks.



Carminic acid is the color in maraschino cherries.

It takes longer to dry the harvested cochineal in the sun, but sun-dried insects produce the smooth, silvery-gray mass prized by the Spanish colonial administration. It's faster to process the insects with boiling water, kerosene, or ash before drying them out, but traditionally sun-dried cochineal brings a higher price. Still, speed counts, and boiling is popular in Peru. Once dried, the cochineal is sifted to remove any stones, sticks, leaves, or soil.

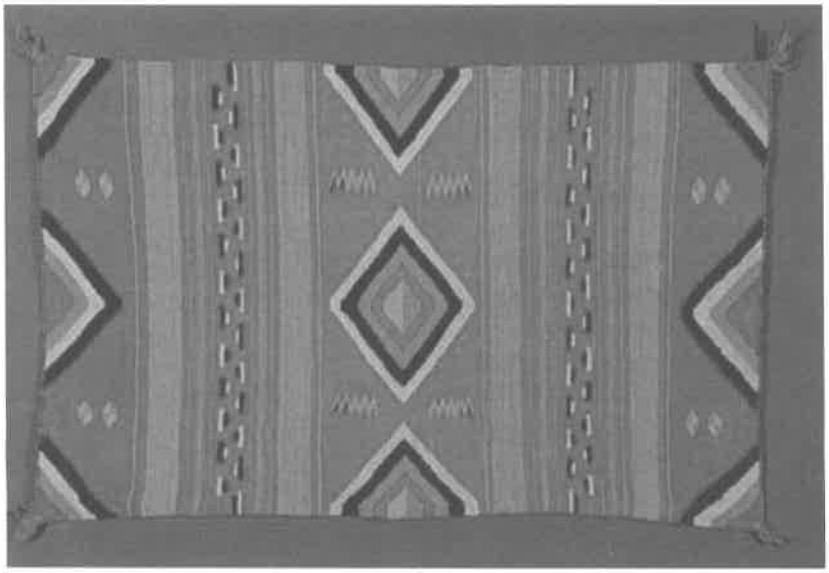
The price of cochineal depends on bug quality and purity. Sorted, all-female, pre- egg-laying cochineal commands the highest price, but "seconds" and "thirds" left over from the sorting are also sold.

A powerful dye—it takes only a minuscule quantity to produce a vibrant stain.

Traders from the coast buy cochineal from local farmers and resell it to large operations in Lima. These middle men buy whatever they can, and these days, there is much for sale. Signs of the cochineal economy are visible everywhere, from carefully tended cactus fields to heaps of purplish bugs baking on burlap bags. Cochineal has taken over the central plaza of Huallanche and even the soccer field where piles of insects can be seen drying in the sun. Bags are lined up in front the town's many small stores, and cochineal dries on the roofs of houses or upon a handkerchief atop a patio wall. A family in need of cash will trade a handful of bugs for money. The trader traveling with me in the truck trudged from house to house, wilting in the 80-degree sun, pleading with people to sell just the tiniest amount.

In some parts of the world, Opuntia *cacti threaten to choke out more desirable plants.*

Cochineal is a powerful dye—it takes only a minuscule quantity to produce a vibrant stain. The townspeople generously demonstrate. A store owner places a dried insect on my outstretched hand. It's just long enough to span a couple of fingerprint whorls. Crushed, it leaves a 4 to 6 mm dark purplish-red stain on my white T-shirt which doesn't come out in the next wash. While the carminic acid in cochineal makes it an excellent textile dye, especially when coloring animal fibers, most cochineal ends up as the red in cosmetics and foods. Carminic acid is the color in maraschino cherries and the red in lipstick. It also shows up in laboratories (the red in chemical pH tests). In colonial times, the demand for cochineal was high. The red in the uniforms worn by the Redcoats was cochineal. Even today, it appears in the red attire of the Canadian Mounted Police (Mounties).



Cochineal is an excellent textile dye, especially when coloring animal fibers.

With the invention and spread of synthetic dyes, the market for cochineal shrunk for a time, only to rise once more as public concerns grew about a possible link between

artificial dyes and cancer.

Not surprisingly, Peru leads the world in cochineal production. Few crops can be grown in the parched summer landscape of Peru's highlands, but cacti thrive. Indeed, the *Opuntia* cactus favored by the cochineal tolerates poor soils, arid conditions, and altitudes up to 3000 meters asl, which perfectly describes the rugged conditions found around Chilca.

Before cochineal, Chilca's peasant farmers struggled to eke out livings on small plots of land. A cochineal economy has meant more money—a lot more—and with it a higher standard of living amidst the parched fields of cactus that allowed this miracle to happen.

riding high on the cochineal wave of prosperity

Peruvian cochineal exports have risen from 180 tons in the early 1980s to 90 percent of the world's harvest of just over 300 tons. Cochineal ranks 32 on Peru's list of dollar-producing income for the period of January to July 1996, a figure higher than both silver and raw cotton. Exports in the first trimester of 1996 were double that of the first three months of 1995. Most cochineal is destined for France, Britain, the United States and Japan, but globally there has been an increase in demand. And things are getting even better. Fifteen years ago the bulk of cochineal sold abroad was in raw form, but more recently, cochineal is processed in Peru, and the fastest-growing cochineal export is carminic acid.

A quick look at Peru's *Directory of Exporters* illustrates the trend. In the early 1980s, only a few business exported cochineal. By the late

The number of cacti determine the size of the cochineal harvest.

1980s, this number had multiplied, leading to a period of mergers as cochineal exporters consolidated. Most of these operate out of Lima, although there is an export company in Arequipa. Ayacucho still produces much more cochineal than Chilca, but its isolated and distant. Also, as cochineal processing was developing in the 1980s, Ayacucho was isolated and paralyzed by guerrilla conflict. Ideally situated and closer to Lima, Chilca is getting a big share of the cochineal market.

Cochineal has made the good life possible, but at a price. With so much prickly pear under cultivation, its value has dropped. Also, this region, for centuries famous for its ceramics, now only boasts a handful of potters. A former potter who left the trade a year ago explains, "Why make *ollas* for only a few soles when you can make fifteen or twenty soles a day from cochineal?" One family of ex-potters now owns two microbuses on the Chilca–Huallanche run bought with the proceeds from cochineal. For many, cochineal is an investment. Quite a few of the traders I meet told of buying up and holding cochineal while they wait for the price to go even higher.

Cochineal's potential growth is not infinite. Cacti need water, however little, and in the arid highlands, the supply of water is limited. The number of cacti determine the size of the cochineal harvest and set limits to the cochineal boom.

Still, continued high demand and Chilca's proximity to Lima bode well. For a while, at least, Chilca seems certain of riding high on the cochineal wave of prosperity.

Many thanks to Cesar Vergara, Don Silvino Resurrección who took time to explain cochineal production to me, the cochineal traders and the residents of Huallanche for their patience, and the reference staff at Cornell's Olin Library for their excellent assistance.

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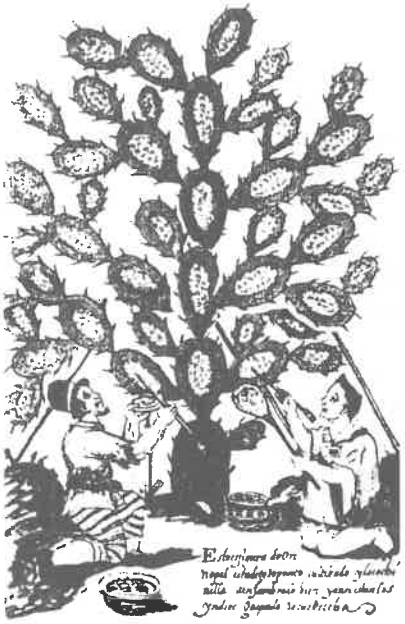

In colonial times, the demand for cochineal was high.

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Flavors of Paraguay: A Cookbook

Lynn Van Houten

Petaluma, California: Anteater Press, 1997. 147 pages, paperback. $16.95

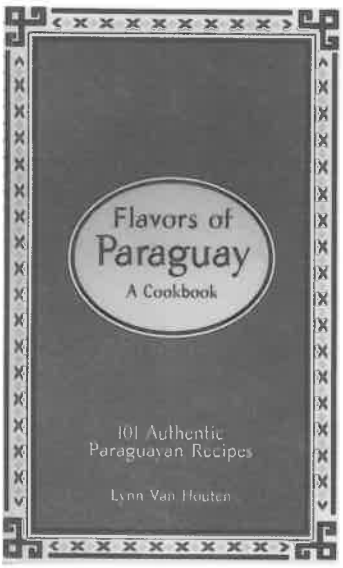
Mention Latin American cookery and most people in the United States would think of spicy Mexican *enchiladas* or perhaps Cuban black beans and rice. For those who have traveled more extensively, Peru's seafood *seviche* or Chilean *empanadas*, laden with olives and bits of hard boiled egg, might come to mind. It would be the rare individual, however, who would know the delights of *boribori* or *chipa guazu*, two of Paraguay's culinary gems.

But that may change now with the publication of *Flavors of Paraguay: A Cookbook* by Lynn Van Houten. Through this collection of 101 recipes, the author hopes to share one of Latin America's least-known cuisines with English-speaking readers.

To savor Paraguay's traditional specialties, one must enter another world—one in which the influence of the Guarani, the country's original inhabitants, is still felt. Simple, hearty, yet delicious, Paraguay's traditional cuisine is—like the nature of its people—charming and straightforward.

According to Josefina Velilla de Aquino, author of the definitive Spanish-language cookbook of traditional Paraguayan dishes, "Our cuisine, like our people, was born of two austere cultures—the Spanish and the Guarani. Maybe that's why to us a steaming bowl of *locro* upon a spotless white tablecloth, a soothing *so'o iosopy*, some fragrant *chipa*, and fresh cheese topped with dark molasses are the height of gastronomic refinement."

Van Houten draws heavily from Aquino's treasury of authentic recipes to add breadth to her own collection. The need for such a comprehensive cookbook was made apparent when she wanted to prepare a Paraguayan meal following the adoption of her daughter, Alexandra, nine years ago. So that her daughter, along with anyone interested in international cuisine, might come to know a wider range of Paraguayan specialties, Van Houten began to collect recipes from numerous sources. In addition to translations of many of Aquino's classic dishes, *Flavors of Paraguay* contains dozens of recipes culled from the cookbooks of well-known authorities on Latin American cooking. Her carefully researched collection also includes dishes from lesser-known—but no less reliable—references, such as cookbooks published by the Organization of American States and by Peace Corps volunteers serving in Paraguay. Several contributions arrived via the internet as well.



Beyond the recipes themselves, Van Houten's text reveals much about the "flavors" of Paraguay. She provides an extensive glossary of foods unique to its cuisine, focusing especially on *mandioca*, or cassava, and caffeine-rich *yerba mate* tea. While both are found in neighboring countries, in rural Paraguay consuming them has become a national pastime. For the North American cook intent upon creating a meal complete with these ingredients, the author has added a useful list of Latino markets in several U.S. cities.

For the enthusiast of Latin American cuisine, this book is a little jewel. For the person fortunate enough to have lived in Paraguay or to have Paraguayan friends, paging through it will certainly evoke memories of fine food and good companions.

—Kathryn Shaw-Gardner

To order *Flavors of Paraguay: A Cookbook*, write On Paraguay, 1724 Burgundy Court, Petaluma, CA 94954.

The Pantanal: Brazil's Forgotten Wilderness

Vic Banks

Vic Banks Productions. VHS video (1 hour).

Want a South American wildlife adventure? Skip the Amazon and head for the Pantanal—or at least get your hands on *The Pantanal: Brazil's Forgotten Wilderness*. The video is a vivid documentary based on Vic Banks's critically acclaimed book of the same title.

For more than a decade, Banks has reported on obscure natural wonders throughout South America. Now, after four years in production, he focuses on the Pantanal, the largest wetland on Earth and home to a truly amazing wealth of wildlife.

At the film's start, Banks quotes Acosta, a 16th century explorer: "Nay, they are ignorant of the greatest part of America, which lies betwixt Peru and Brasil...some say it is drowned land...others affirm there are great and flourishing kingdoms..." Does this hold true today? Banks challenges current eco-sensibilities with his answer. Geoff Mohan of the Tampa Tribune wrote, "Banks's work deserves

praise for momentarily deflecting the media limelight from the 'politically chic' rainforest to this strange and overlooked swampland, hopefully awakening a cartographic amnesia among the world's environmentalists."

With cameraman Greg Hensley and Brazilian guide Gaspar, Banks covered more than 9,000 miles of film to profile this mysterious land. For weeks they made their way down the Transpantaneira, the only road through this area, which Banks laughingly dubs as "an all-weather highway which is no good in all weather."

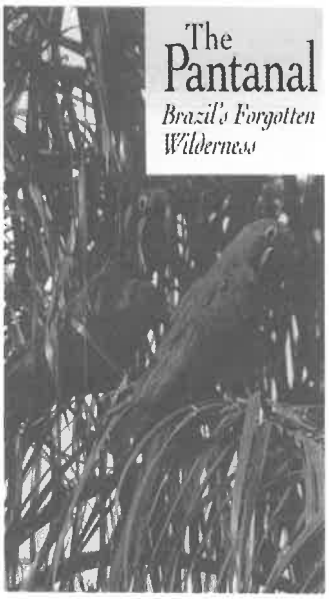
His narration brims with information, yet is often humorous and self-effacing as he describes a veritable tropical bestiary. The cycle of seasons rolls by as Banks climbs into giant hyacinth macaw nests, stalks eerie-eyed caiman and fruit-eating fish, spies on enormous wading bird colonies, lures jaguars, and witnesses an attack by a nineteen-foot anaconda.

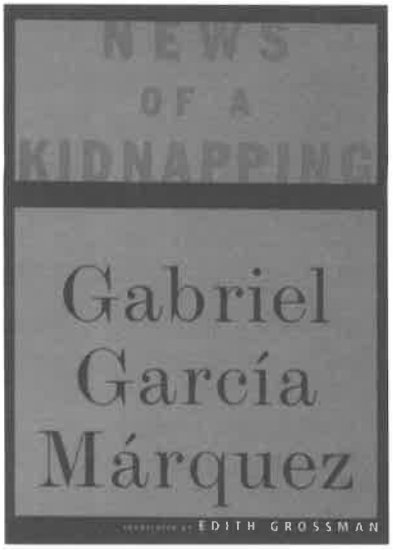
There's more: natural history, Brazilian cowboys, and even former U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt and Brazilian explorer Candidio Rondon's travels through the Pantanal in 1914.

If you can't travel there soon, see this incredible, award-winning video. Indeed, it may soon be your last look at the virgin Pantanal—according to Banks, despoilers are already hard at work.

—Rick Phillips

To order *The Pantanal: Brazil's Forgotten Wilderness*, write Vic Banks Productions, 1466 W. Rascher Avenue, Chicago, IL 60640.





News of a Kidnapping

Gabriel García Márquez (translated from Spanish by Edith Grossman)

New York, New York: Knopf, 1997. 291 pages, hardcover. $25.00

Perhaps the first question that those of us who greedily anticipate fiction from Gabriel García Márquez asked upon the release of his remarkable new book, *News of a Kidnapping,* a non-fiction work: Why? Why would the Nobel laureate, arguably the best damn novelist on the planet, return to his roots as a journalist? And, then, is it worth reading? But a smitten fan like myself could spy the trend in his work—his last book, *Of Love and Other Demons* (1995), was based on a resurrected story the young García Márquez covered as a reporter in 1949. And I've always suspected that the magical realism of García Márquez's novels is not merely poetic device or metaphor, but based on the real world, the realm outside literature.

García Márquez answers my first question himself in the introduction. The story detailed in this book "is only one episode in the biblical holocaust that has been consuming Colombia for more than twenty years." Born in Aracataca, Colombia in 1928, he clearly sees this episode through the eyes of a native son and the tragedy of Colombia as his own.

News of a Kidnapping concerns the abduction of ten journalists and aides by the Extraditables, the nom de plume of the Medellín drug cartel, and its chief, Pablo Escobar. The abductions, and thus the lives of the hostages, were to be a negotiating chip in the bargaining between the government of Colombia and the Extraditables. Escobar, with the power and cash of a small government, was tired of running from his enemies (which included every armed force in Colombia and the rival Calí cartel) and wanted to turn himself in so the Colombian government would be responsible for his protection in a place of incarceration where he, his men, and his family would be safe—and where he could continue his illicit operations. *News of a Kidnapping* centers around the abduction of Maruja Pachón and her sister in law and assistant, Beatriz Guerrero. Through their story, García Márquez frames the horror of the others abducted and the nation as a whole. It is a heartbreaking story, made more poignant because we get a very real sense of Colombia and of its brilliant, sad, effervescent soul.

It is a story told in fascinating, powerful detail. Facing rumors from her guards (Maruja's only source of information) that her release is imminent—rumors that could in reality mean her execution as well her freedom—"Maruja wanted to put on the clothes she had been wearing when she arrived, foreseeing a sudden release that would have her appearing in front of the camera dressed in a captive's melancholy sweatsuit." Maruja Pachón's vanity about her dress reveals a human frailty that make her suffering more palpable than a simple retelling of the facts ever could. Those of us who write fiction (and you know who you are) are used to bouts of covetous depression after reading Mr. García Márquez's novels; it's now the journalists' turn, especially considering the rather moribund state of American journalism.

So, my second question, whether or not this book would be worth reading, was a ridiculous one. *News of a Kidnapping,* like his previous novels, is written in luminescent prose. James Joyce boasted that if Dublin were destroyed, it could be rebuilt completely from his works; *News of a Kidnapping* gives the nightmare of Colombia's civil war a heartbreaking life.

—Christopher Holmes

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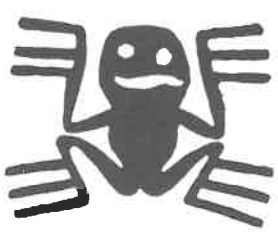

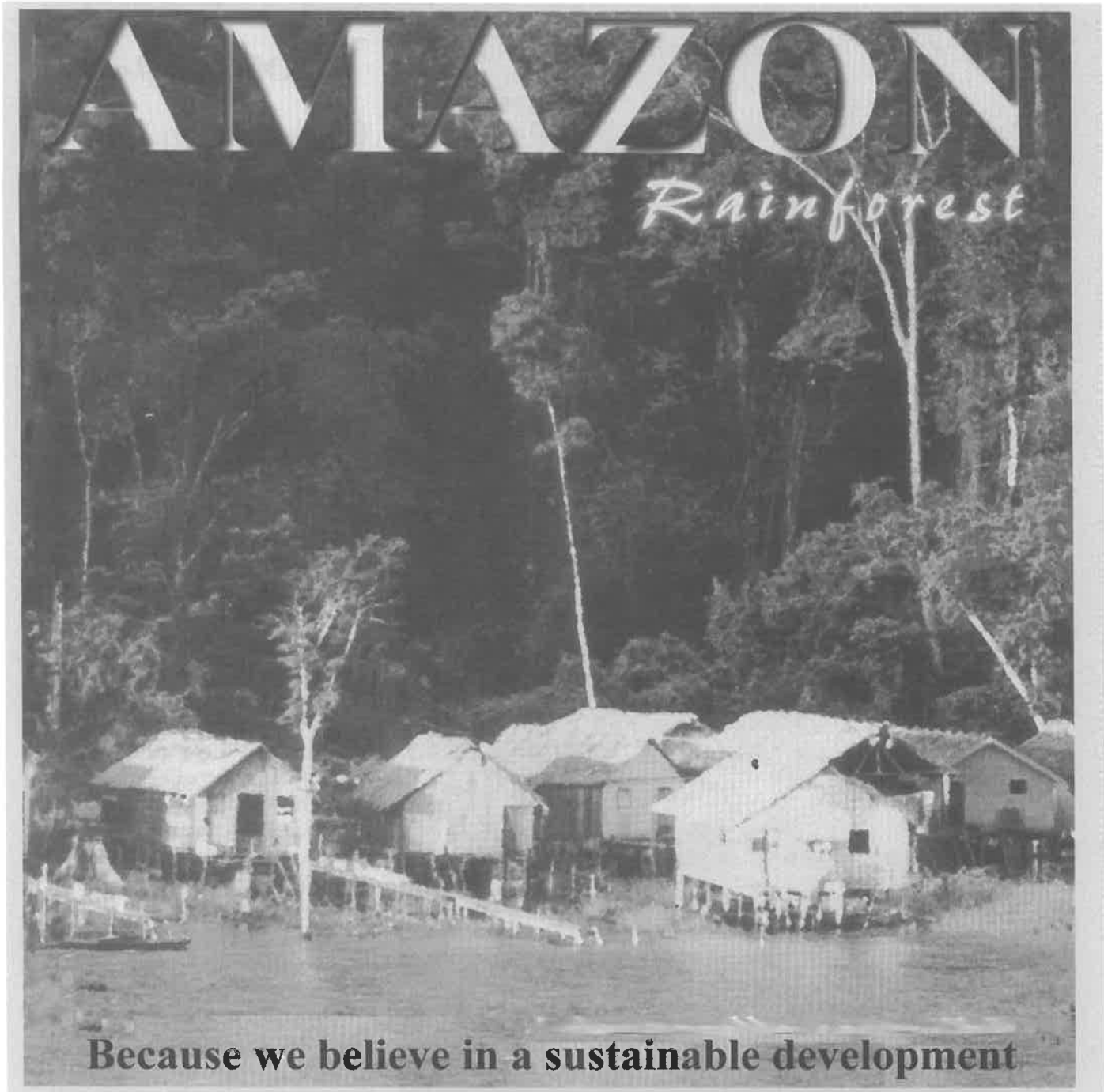

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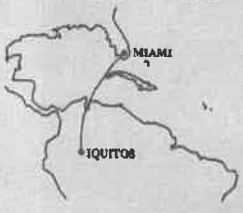

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Those That Can—Dune...

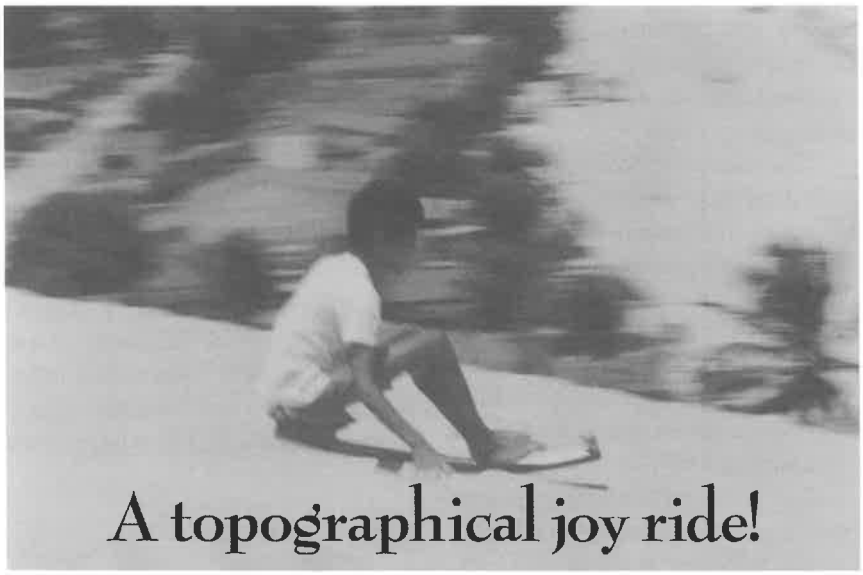
Photos and text by Tom Cockrem

When I hear of buggy rides on the sand dunes in Natal, Brazil, I think of Sandy Point back home in Australia. There, the dunes are ardently protected and people forbidden from even walking on their fragile forms. I'm assured that in Natal only accredited drivers do the trip and that they follow strictly laid out tracks. OK, I think, let's try it.

Natal, the capital of Rio Grande do Norte, is one of a string of subtropical beachside cities strung out along the northeast coast of Brazil. I'm told it's the city of eternal sun. I stay in town near the beach. It's reputation holds true. We have brilliant sunshine every day.

Paulo, my *bugeiro,* picks me up at the hotel. With his trendy garb, shades, and laid-back style, Paulo is the archetypal cowboy of the dunes. "More or less," he answers when I ask if he speaks English. I've heard this response quite a bit over the past few days, and it more or less means the answer is really "no." Never mind; I know at least ten words in Portuguese.

The *dunas* are at Genipapu Beach. The drive takes a half an hour. As we leave town, I get a terrific elevated view of Natal beach. A reef of flat rock breaks the waves and forms a wading beach—at low-tide it makes a great soccer field for the kids.



A topographical joy ride!

Twenty or so thatch-roofed bars line the water front.

On the way to Genipapu, Paulo gets it through to me that we'll see at least six different beaches. We sweep along the Praia da Redirh's foreshore and head inland. It's incredible. The tracts of sand undulating westward from the sea looked more like a desert than a series of dunes. Clearly, you need a buggy—or a camel—to negotiate these parts.

We don't see camels, but there are donkeys. They stand beside their owners, peddlers selling Cokes, coconuts, or donkey rides. The view is spectacular. Down to the left, across a wide lagoon, the turquoise waters lap the sand on Genipapu Beach lap. Out at sea, a lone fishing boat bobs in, just short of the horizon. My reveries are shattered as Paulo crests the dune and fearlessly plunges toward the beach. I hope this is a track! In a flash, we're there. The boat I saw from atop the dune scrapes onto the shore. I'm amazed. Somehow both boat and buggy have arrived with lightning speed.

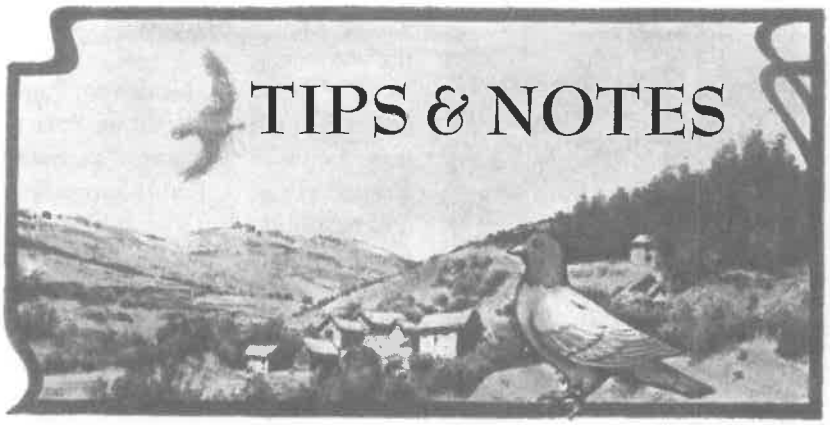
Curious, I ask Paulo about the fences behind the beach. "They separate crops," Paulo informs me. "Here we grow coconuts and cashews."

Kids hawk seashells and souvenirs. A favorite souvenir is the village-in-a-bottle. I watch a young girl. With great patience, she creates the sandy scene with sand of different colors. I marvel that it survives Paulo's madcap antics at the wheel.

We swerve around breaking waves, zoom past villages, plow through powdery drifts of sand, and skid along rivulets before turning back toward town.

A memorable adventure, six whirlwind hours—a topographical joy ride.

Natal is another world where *bugerios* in their buggies are the rulers of the dunes.



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Right now, researchers in Latin America are hard at work preserving the giant ferns in the Mote Verde reserve of Costa Rica, observing the behaviors of the owl monkey and the capybara in Argentina, gathering data to preserve Belize's wetlands, and searching for 10,000-year-old artifacts near Lake Titicaca left by ancient Peru's earliest settlers. But in order to continue these projects, they need your help.

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Take You for Granted

Planning an expedition into *la selva*? Or is cartobibliography more your thing? In either case, you could be eligible for an Expedition Advisory Centre (EAC) grant. The EAC, a subset of the Royal Geographic Society and the Institute of British Geographers, aims to raise the quality, effectiveness, and safety of all expeditions overseas.

The Grant for Scientific Expeditions Overseas offers up to £3,000 for research that has "a significant geographical component and will advance the frontiers of scientific knowledge." Also, the Sir George Fordham Award for Carto-bibliography 1999 gives £250 to individuals who have contributed to the field of cartobibliography.

For full details and an application form, contact: Expedition Grants Secretary at the RS-IBG. Tel: 011-44-171-591-3073, Fax: 011-171-591-3031, e-mail: grants @rgs.org

Helping Hands

Some hints for securing volunteer positions with groups based in South America:

•Securing a volunteer position with a small group based in South America is best done when you are actually there. Finding out about groups that need your help, is usually quite informal: You meet someone who is a member of a community group, talk to them, get information about other groups, and/or names of contacts for specific projects, and so on.

•The major prerequisite for volunteer work is fluency in Spanish (or Portuguese in Brazil) since the other workers in the organization will most likely be natives of the country in which you are working and probably won't speak English.

•Volunteering allows you to work for an organization that actually *needs* you rather than one that can pay you. Some prospective volunteers understand that they won't get a paycheck but expect room and board. However, far and away, Latin American organizations usually require that *you* pay for room and board in order to participate in some research project.

•Both the Quito and Lima Clubhouses can provide you with the most current information about volunteering in Ecuador and Peru and have trip reports from volunteers and brochures from

many agencies. Since we rely on member trip reports to keep our information up-to-date, please write us a trip report if you do any volunteer work, even if it's just for a day.

•Check out our Cyberpage on page 32 for resources on the web that can help you secure a volunteer position in Latin America.

Gone Postal

Been wondering what to give your Club on its twentieth birthday, the Club that's generally believed to have everything? Well, despair not. There is one little homey item that would be just the right thing. You guessed it—a digital postal meter.

So, when you rush out to your post office to buy the Club a postal meter, here's what you say, "Do you have the latest model digital postal meter? The one that lets you add postage by telephone and that can also weigh large envelopes?" The postal clerk will know what this means and show you a costly little model in the $2000 range. This is what the Club wants.

Of course, you might not want to buy the Club a postal meter just now, and we can appreciate that. The thought is that you might have an old digital postal meter kicking around somewhere, a vintage digital postal meter, so to speak, from the days before you upgraded all your office equipment and got seriously down to business. If so, that's the digital postal meter (if it can handle large envelopes) that the Club needs.

What's in it for you? Well, let's remember that it's better to give than to receive. And there's always that tax deduction that just might drop you into a lower tax bracket and save you a bundle while you're doing something good...

From Jane Heart:

When our luggage didn't arrive (and we chose not to go to Cusco without it), Continental put us in the downtown Sheraton in Lima, a hotel and location we would never have visited. Near the Plaza San Martin we found El Gran Pajaten, an artisan's co-op full of amazing crafts by 350 artisans from every part of Peru! The staff was quite friendly and helpful. Address: Jr. De la Union 1054-B.

From Richard Ryan:

The Venezuelan government has been working on a first-class highway from the Andean city of Merida to the city of El Vigia on the south end of the Maracaibo Basin. It is nearly complete and is shown on new road maps.

I warn those who may drive it that the final link, a tunnel through a mountain near El Vigia, is a problem. This tunnel was officially dedicated in October 1996 and was due to open in December of that year. The tunnel diggers started from both ends and when both were halfway through, they were not even close to meeting—a big miscalculation. Last I heard, they were still deciding where to go from there. They've already put up the road signs indicating that the way to El Vigia is the right fork of an intersection where the new highway leaves the old route. This leads right to the incomplete tunnel. A large pile of boulders, nearly invisible at night, blocks the entrance. Beware!

From Jay Hansen:

I'm on my way to Ecuador from Miami, Florida for only $250 round-trip, thanks to a courier service. I called Gloria at 305-592-1771 in Miami and found out that there are many inexpensive South American trips available if you're willing to be told when to depart and arrive and are comfortable with limiting your luggage to carry-on only.

Do you have any tips you picked up during your travels? Send them to Tips from the Road, South American Explorers Club, 126 Indian Creek Road, Ithaca, NY 14850 or e-mail us at :

tips&notes@samexplo.org.

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Charles Brod

You thought this was out of print, didn't you? Well, you're right. Still, it just so happens we have a swatch squirreled away for that rare breed of guidebook cognicenti who know how to appreciate a cultural walking and trekking guide to Cuzco. For the best on the Inca Trail, day walks around Cuzco and the Sacred Valley, treks in the Cordilleras Vilcabamba (from Mollepata), Vicanota, Urubamba and more, this is the book. A splendid companion to *Exploring Cusco* and the *Cuzco & Machu Picchu Information Packet.*

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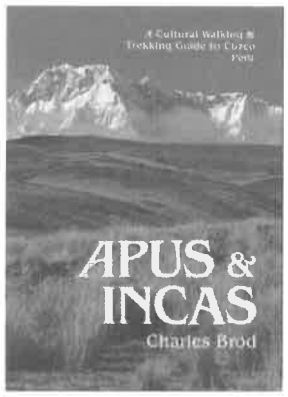

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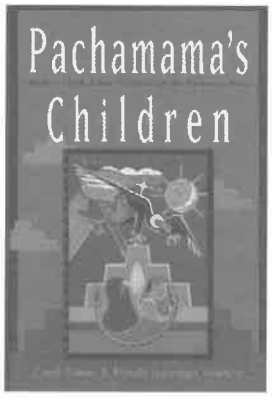

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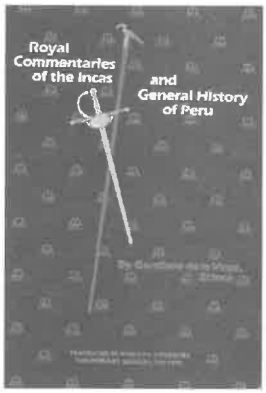

The Land of the Incas

Jacques Soustelle,
Photos: Hans Silvester

When this book went out of print, a great howl of dismay went up from members around the world. The Club staff in Ithaca rent their garments and wailed. But now, a merrier mood prevails both here and afar. It's back in stock. This charming picture book is delightful and clearly impressed a review in the *New York Times* book review who said, "Peru must be the most beautiful place in the world." Truly a spectacular series of vibrant photographs of landscapes, people, wildlife, market scenes, festivals, ancient sites, mountains, and more.

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The Incas and Their Ancestors: The Archaeology of Peru

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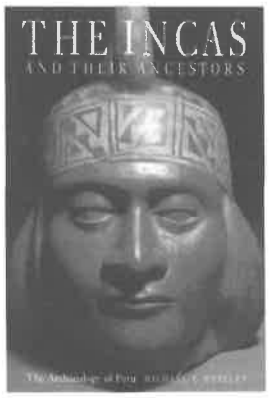

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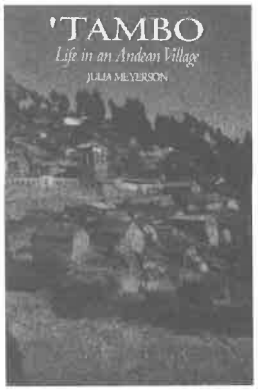

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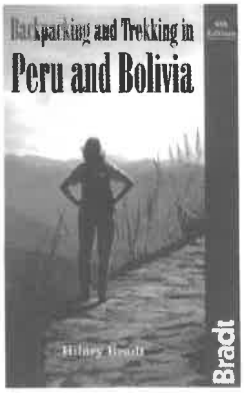

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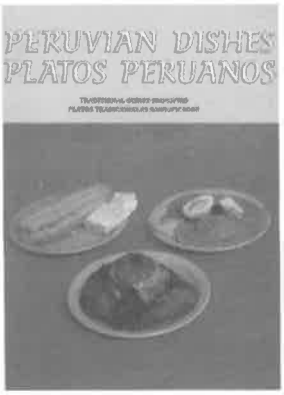

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